

SUNDAR KAND

The Fifth Canto of Ram Charit Manas

By Goswami Tulsidas

[The Full Text, Roman Transliteration, Detailed English Exposition
With Notes]

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Presented In English By:--

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DEDICATION

THIS BOOK IS DEDICATED TO MY BELOVED LORD RAM

I dedicate this Book to Lord Sri Ram who is my dearest of dear, most beloved, the essence of my life and being, and for whom, and for whose pleasure, and on whose behest, and on whose divine mission, this book is dedicated.

Nothing that I write is of my own creation. It is the Lord who is getting it done. So I deserve no credit. However, being an ordinary man like the rest of us, I may have committed errors, and for those I beg forgiveness. I hope this book will help to continue the great tradition of singing the glories of the different aspects of same indivisible one Divinity in order to meet diverse needs of the Soul, the Spirit, one such being to find peace and happiness amidst the surrounding turmoil of the world by being able to spend some time in the thoughts of the Divine Being, the same 'Parmatma', the same Lord known by different names in different tongues.

No creature is perfect; it's foolhardy to claim so. The best of paintings cannot replace the original; the best of words cannot express the original emotions and sentiments. Even the Lord was not satisfied by one flower or one butterfly—he went on endlessly evolving and designing newer forms. So, I have done my best, I have poured out my being in these books. Honestly, I am totally incompetent—it was the Lord who had done the actual writing and had moved my fingers as if they were merely an instrument in his divine hands. But nonetheless, it's a tribute to the Lord's glory that he does not take the credit himself, but bestows it to them whom he loves as his very own. And to be 'his very own' is indeed an unmatched honour. However, I still beg forgiveness for all omissions, commissions and transgressions on my part that I may have inadvertently made. It's the Lord's glories that I sing, rejoice in, write on and think of to the best of my ability. I hope my readers will also absorb the divine fragrance effusing from the flowers representing the Lord's books, enjoy the ambrosia pouring out of them and marvel at the Lord's stupendous glories.

I submit this effort at the holy feet of my beloved Lord Ram whom even Lord Shiva had revered and worshipped. And surely of course to Lord Hanuman who was a manifestation of Shiva himself. Finding no words to express my profound gratitude to Ram, I just wish to remain quiet, and let my silence do the speaking and praying on my behalf.

I hope the reader will find my book useful and interesting. Since English is an international language, this book will help the English speaking world to access this masterpiece of classical Indian scriptural text.

“He leadeth me! O blessed tho't!
O words with heav'nly comfort fraught!
What-e'er I do, wher-e'er I be,
Still 'tis God's hand that leadeth me!” [A Hymn]

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia
Author

SUNDAR KAND

The Fifth Canto of Ram Charit Manas

By Goswami Tulsidas

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Preface

This Book in a detailed English exposition of “Sundar Kand” of the epic known as the ‘Ram Charit Manas’ written by Goswami Tulsidas.

‘Sundar Kand’ is the fifth Chapter or Canto of not only Ram Charit Manas but of all the other versions of the ‘Ramayana’ that narrate the divine story of Lord Ram.

This Chapter describes that part of the story where Sita was discovered by Hanuman, the messenger sent by Lord Ram to search for her. Sita was held captive in Lanka, the demon kingdom of which Ravana was the king. Hanuman had punished the demons by burning their capital city of Lanka. We also read in this Chapter how and why Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, comes to join Lord Ram’s camp; how Mandodari and one of Ravana’s spies named Shuk tried to reason with Ravana and persuade him to make peace with Lord Ram to avoid the war that was bound to devastate the entire demon race and their kingdom; how Lord Ram and his army of monkeys and bears reached the shore of the mighty ocean that blocked their way; and how Lord Ram subdued the Deity of the ocean which advised the Lord to build a bridge across the water in order to reach Lanka.

‘Sundar Kand’ is the fifth Canto and often the most read part of the classical epic known as Ram Charit Manas of Goswami Tulsidas, a Holy Book that narrates the divine story of Lord Ram, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being. The Sundar Kand symbolizes the dawn of hope after a dark night of hopelessness and despair, because it is in this Canto that Sita is traced by Hanuman after Lord Ram had lost all hopes of finding her, thus instilling hope in the heart of both Lord Ram and Sita that they would now be united once again. It is also here that Vibhishan, the brother of Ravana, too finds a way to his freedom and redemption from the evil of being called a demon by the virtue of his birth in this race, because he goes to surrender before Lord Ram and is warmly welcomed by him.

Primarily, ‘Sundar Kand’ is dedicated to Hanuman as it highlights his glories and wonderful achievements that had been praised by Lord Ram himself. In fact, Lord

Ram had said that he will ever remain indebted to Hanuman. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 32—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.}

The ‘Sundar Kand’ commemorates the following four landmark events in the story of the Ramayana: (i) The crossing of the ocean by Hanuman; (ii) Hanuman meeting Sita; (iii) The burning of the city of Lanka; and (iv) Vibhishan, Ravana’s younger brother, coming to seek refuge with Lord Ram, and he being warmly welcomed and accepted by the Lord.

Having said that, let us now read a little more about the events that ‘Sundar Kand’ covers:-

Hanuman leapt across the ocean. On his way, he met the demoness named Sursa who could catch the shadow of anything flying overhead, and overcame her with his wit. Then he landed on the shore of Lanka, the capital of the demons that was ruled by their ruthless king Ravana, the one with ten heads. At this time, Hanuman was in a very small form, like that of a mosquito. At the entrance of the city he met Lankini, the demoness gatekeeper, and punched her, leaving her bleeding profusely. She then allowed him to go in, prophesying that the end of the cruel demons was now at hand. Once inside the city, he roamed around in search of Sita and came to the dwelling of Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana but a great devotee of Lord Vishnu. Vibhishan and Hanuman met each other, became friends, and the former told the latter the place where Sita was confined. It was a garden known as the Ashoka Vaatika or the garden of Ashoka trees.

Hanuman entered the garden and hid himself behind thick foliage of the tree under which Sita sat brooding and in grief. At the opportune time Hanuman dropped the signet ring of Lord Ram that he had brought along. Sita picked it up, and thus the two—Hanuman and Sita became acquainted with each other. Hanuman reassured Sita that her days of grief were soon to end as the Lord would come as soon as he goes back to him with the news of his meeting with her. Sita was extremely happy and relieved. Then Hanuman took her leave and ruined the garden of its fruit bearing trees. Ravana heard of the destruction and was alarmed, sent his army under the command of his son Meghanad to catch Hanuman and bring him to the court. Hanuman tried his best to plead with Ravana to avoid confrontation with the Lord and give Sita back to him, but Ravana flatly refused. The ill-witted demons tried to mock at the Lord by deforming his messenger, and so they decided to burn his tail. This was a god-sent opportunity Hanuman was waiting for to settle accounts with the demons, so as soon as the cloth that was wrapped round his tail and soaked in oil was set alight, he escaped from their captivity and went on a rampage in the city, dragging and swaying the fiercely burning tail behind him. This resulted in a huge fire, and the golden city of Lanka was reduced to ashes. Hanuman jumped into the ocean to douse the flame, took his last leave from Sita and jumped across the ocean to this side of the shore where his other companions waited anxiously for his return.

The ‘Crossing of the Ocean’ and the subsequent ‘Burning of Lanka’ were singular feats of bravery, courage, dare-devilry and wit that totally demoralized the evil demons and made Hanuman an immortal hero in the realm of mythological history.

The party went jubilantly to report the success to Lord Ram, who was overwhelmed with joy and happiness. There was cheer and rejoicing everywhere. A huge army of monkeys and bears was assembled forthwith and the Lord started on for the final phase of his forest exile to conquer Lanka and kill the fierce demons led by Ravana, thereby fulfilling the promise Lord Vishnu had made to the tormented earth, to the worried sages and seers, and to the terrified Gods that he would rid them of their fear and tyranny of the demons.

The army reached the shores of the ocean. The Lord first tried not to embarrass the ocean by crossing it forcefully without permission, so he tried to please the ocean god. But when the Lord found that he is adamant, the Lord drew his arrow to dry up the whole ocean. Terrified, the ocean god relented and begged forgiveness. He advised the Lord to build a bridge across the water, and so the great bridge was constructed.

The huge army which seemed to stretch till the horizon crossed the ocean, some walking over the bridge, some jumping over the back of the marine creatures who had come to the surface to watch the spectacle, some simply leaping to the other side, and some riding on the back of their friends and companions. It was a huge tide of monkeys and bears sweeping on the shores of Lanka. Thus, the Lord landed on Lanka.

This is the end of this fifth phase of the story called the ‘Sundar Kand’.

Now, let us see briefly what is so ‘Sundar’ or beautiful in this Kand, and why it is named as ‘Sundar Kand’.

First we shall examine: why is it so ‘beautiful’ (Sundar). This phase is ‘beautiful’ because a new day has dawned beckoning of hope and redemption amid the previous environment of loss, gloom, grief, hopelessness and haplessness. Now onwards, despair and dejection are replaced by hope and rejoicing. Insurmountable and formidable barriers are overcome, the ocean is crossed, the obstacles met during the crossing are overcome, then the female demon named Lankini who guarded Lanka is silenced, the impregnable fort of Lanka representing a den of vices, negativity, sins and evil is reduced to ashes, Sita and Vibhishan are both promised redemption, liberation and deliverance, and what some time ago was a ‘lost hope’ is now converted into an ‘attainable hope’, an ‘attainable objective’. Metaphorically, the creature who is firmly held captive to the entanglements of this deluding world but is yearning to break free from his fetters is assured that his redemption is at hand and the Lord is ever ready to take any trouble he has to take in order to liberate the creature and provide him deliverance from his torments should he be sincere and steadfast in his devotion, submission and love for the Lord.

The construction of the bridge has immense symbolic meaning. It signifies the bridging of the gap between hopelessness and hope, between despair and rejoicing, between the trapped creature and his salvation and redemption. The yawning gap of the ocean-like world of delusions and entrapments is no barrier wide enough or formidable enough which the Lord cannot overcome to provide the subjects of his creation with freedom from their torments and horrors if only they are sincerely desirous of the Lord’s intervention and help. Salvation and emancipation of the

creature, liberation and deliverance of his soul are never an unreachable destination if he is steady in his spiritual pursuit and has steady faith and devotion for the Lord.

This ocean-like world of delusions cannot become a barrier strong enough to separate such a creature and his Atma (soul) from the Supreme Being who is the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma (Soul) of this world. The strong fort of Lanka representing the different shortcomings that the creature has that keeps him firmly shackled to this world will be broken in a moment if the creature sincerely prays to the Lord to provide him liberation and deliverance from this bondage.

This phase of the story is ‘beautiful’ because ‘goodness and righteousness’ are finally looking up and showing signs of triumph over ‘bad and evil’. The gloomy and depressive phase is over, and it is replaced with courage, hope and victory.

Now let us see why this Chapter (Canto) is named as ‘Sundar Kand’. It is to be noted that all other chapters of Ram Charit Manas, or for that matter any other version of Lord Ram’s eternal and divine story that is known universally as the epic ‘Ramayana’, are named to indicate the various landmark events of Lord Ram’s life; they refer to particular phase in the life of Lord Ram, or the geographical area where the concerned events generally occurred.

For instance, the first chapter ‘Baal Kand’ is so-called as it describes the childhood phase of Lord Ram and explains the reasons which formed the background of Lord Vishnu revealing himself as the young prince of the kingdom of Ayodhya who was named as ‘Ram’. The word “Baal” means a young boy; it refers to the adolescent phase of Lord Ram from the time he was born, through his early childhood and growing up period, till the time he got married to Sita, the princess of the kingdom of Janakpur, and returned with her to his kingdom of Ayodhya.

The second chapter ‘Ayodhya Kand’ refers to the developments that unfolded in the capital city of the kingdom of Ayodhya that led to Lord Ram going to the forest and what happened behind him. This phase of the Lord’s life revolved around the city and the kingdom of Ayodhya—hence this chapter got its name as ‘Ayodhya Kand’.

When Lord Ram entered the ‘forest’, then all the events that generally occurred there are collectively called ‘Aranya Kand’, because the word “Aranya” means a ‘dense forest’. This was the third phase of the story. It is here that Sita was abducted by Ravana.

Developments compelled the Lord to move further south to another kingdom known as “Kishkindha” in search of Sita; it was the kingdom of the monkey-and-bear race. So this fourth chapter is named ‘Kishkindha Kand’. It is here that he befriended Sugriv and a search for Sita was launched.

The last two chapters, the sixth and the seventh, are known as ‘Lanka Kand’ and ‘Uttar Kand’ respectively. ‘Lanka Kand’ is so-called obviously because it was here that the epic war was fought. And ‘Uttar Kand’ is so-called because of two reasons: (a) After the war of Lanka, Lord Ram headed to the ‘north’ (“Uttar”) to go back to his own kingdom of Ayodhya, and (b) This marks the ‘end’ or the ‘conclusion’ of this divine story which had assumed the importance and the stature that made it an equivalent of an ancient scripture, and the concluding chapter of all

ancient scriptures bear the prefix “Uttar”. This explains why the seventh, and the last, chapter of the Ramayana is called the ‘Uttar Kand’.

Now, let us come to the fifth chapter, which is the subject matter of our discussion, and examine why it is called “Sundar Kand”. It is in this chapter where we read how Hanuman found Sita as a prisoner of Ravana, the demon king of the island kingdom of Lanka, and how he had burnt the demon capital as a token of punishment.

Well, the demon kingdom of Lanka was situated on a chain of a high mountain range having three extended summits which were in the form of plateaus or flat lands. This mountain was generally called ‘Trikoote’, and its three summits were called (i) Mt. Subel, (ii) Mt. Trikoote, and (iii) Mt. Sundar. Since the capital city of the demon race and their island kingdom had the same name of ‘Lanka’, so the term ‘Mt. Trikoote’ was used to mean both.

Out of these three summits, the one towards the northern edge of the kingdom that faced the mainland of India was called ‘Mt. Subel’. It was on this high summit that both Hanuman and Lord Ram had landed when they came to Lanka, the former who came alone in search of Sita, and the latter with a huge army of monkeys and bears to free her and vanquish Ravana and the cruel demons. It is from here that Hanuman and Lord Ram could have a bird’s eye view of the capital city of Lanka. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 3 (Hanuman); and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 11 (Lord Ram with his army).}

The second summit was called ‘Mt. Trikoote’, and it was the main summit over which the grand gilded and glittering city of Lanka, the capital of the kingdom of the demon race, was situated. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 28.}

Beyond it, on the southern end of the island, was the third summit known as ‘Mt. Sundar’. It was a rich verdent forest and a pleasant garden retreat for the demon king Ravana; it was beautifully landscaped with green trees that had thick foliage, flowers and fruits. As is still the general pattern for creating private pleasure gardens for great kings and emperors and other rich people, it had many pavilions and large shady trees as well as all other things needed for relaxation and enjoyment of sensual pleasures. One of such pavilions harboured the shrine of the goddess whom Ravana used to worship; and it was under one of the huge trees that Sita sat.

The name “Sundar” fits the bill perfectly as it was a most beautiful forest-garden richly endowed with all the richness of greenery and beauty that Nature could ever provide, and was lavished with all the items of pleasure and comfort that existed during that period of time.

Since the events narrated in the fifth chapter of Ram Charit Manas revolve primarily around this particular Mt. Sundar, where Sita was held captive under one Ashok tree in a garden also having the name of Ashok grove, it is called “Sundar Kand”.

Of the three summits, Mt. Trikoote lay in the center, Mt. Sundar to its south, and Mt. Subel to its north. This was the general layout of the island kingdom of Lanka, and

upon close examination it explains why neither Hanuman nor Lord Ram could see the Ashok garden where Sita was held captive. They looked south from the top of Mt. Subel, and what they saw was the second summit known as Mt. Trikoot, i.e. the extensive expanse of the capital city, with its high buildings, ramparts, spires and towers. This blocked the view beyond; they could not see Mt. Sundar because it was further south of Mt. Trikoot, on the other end of Lanka.

This geography also explains why the Ashok garden was not burnt when Hanuman set fire to the capital city of Lanka. It was not within the parameter of the fort; it was not within the city of Lanka but at a respectable distance from it, on a separate summit known as Mt. Sundar. That is why though the fire ravaged the whole city of Lanka situated on Mt. Trikoot it left Ashok grove untouched by its fury because it was located on Mt. Sundar.

It also explains why Ashok garden was spared the ravages of the blood-curdling war that devastated the capital city of Lanka—as it was far away from the battle-field and the arena where the main action unfolded.

Ravana had an immortal fear of some kind of invasion from the mainland which was merely 100 Yojans (roughly 800 miles) away from the northern tip of Lanka. There was no fear from any other side as the nearest land was hundreds and thousands of miles away, and at that point of time completely uninhabited.

So therefore, Ravana had chosen Mt. Subel as a sort of a watching point to keep an eye from invasion from the north, had made Mt. Trikoot his capital city as this summit was the largest of the three, and kept Mt. Sundar for his private retreat and a place to relax at the far end in the south.

Why did he keep Sita on Mt. Sundar, in the private garden called Ashok Van? Well, the answers are simple and straightforward:

(i) He wished to keep her away from the hawkish stares of other male demons, which would not have been possible if he had kept her in some conventional prison within the city of Lanka;

(ii) It would be very unsafe to keep her with other prisoners who would themselves tease her and enjoy when the prison guards would tease her to derive sadistic pleasure as a past time.

(iii) He had brought Sita with a full understanding that his salvation and emancipation lay in being killed by Lord Ram, for he had guessed rightly and correctly that the Lord was not an ordinary prince but the Supreme Being himself who has come to grant his soul deliverance from the gross and evil body of a demon. All versions of the Ramayana endorse this point—e.g. (a) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23; and (b) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 5, verse nos. 58-61; Canto 6, verse nos. 30-32.

(iv) So therefore, though he had to make an external show of treating Sita as an ordinary captive, internally he wished to make sure that she was made as much comfortable as was possible under the given circumstances. His private garden was both beautiful with verdant greenery, was richly endowed with fruit bearing trees and flowering plants, as well as was exceptionally comfortable with huge trees with thick cover of foliage that provided enough shade and coolness. Besides this, it was calm and quiet as it was away from the cacophony of the bustling city of Lanka that was

full of boisterous demon warriors who drank and got involved in frequent brawls. Ravana thought that Sita would live peacefully here, undisturbed and un-tormented.

Finally, I wish to make one thing absolutely clear—it is that whatever I write is not anything of my own creation nor a product of my scholarship for the simple reason that I am not a scholar at all nor do I have the required skill or the competence to write a Book explaining in detail the verses of Ram Charit Manas, a divine Book that is honoured and revered as a personified form of Lord Ram himself. Surely then it is Lord Ram Himself who had employed my hands to write what He had wished to be written, and so obviously ‘He’ is the author and I am merely a ‘pen’ or a ‘tool’ in His hands. Say, how can a pen know what is being written by the author?

Of course it is true that the fortunate and the lucky ‘pen’—which is used as an instrument by an Author to write something of a momentous nature, the import and dimension and reach of which cannot be measured in any known measurable terms the mortal world knows of, as it is of an eternal value and is timeless in age—feels honoured and privileged and blessed to have been chosen for this noble purpose, but nevertheless it, the ‘pen’, can never claim that it is the one that wrote what has been written, because the real, the actual, ‘Author’ is someone else. So is the case that applies to me as well.

So therefore, I present this Book at the holy feet of my most beloved and dearest Lord Ram who is the essence of my being, who is my closest and nearest and only friend, who is my only partner in life, who is my sole parent, and with whom I freely and without reservations share my joys and pains, as well as at the holy feet of Hanuman whom I revere as my eternal guru. I hope they will smile at my effort, and excuse me for any errors I may have inadvertently committed.

Amen !

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SUNDAR KAND

The Fifth Canto of Ram Charit Manas

By Goswami Tulsidas

[The Full Text, Roman Transliteration, Detailed English Exposition
With Notes]

The Story Thus Far

Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of the Supreme Being that is known as the ‘Viraat Purush’, had assumed a human form as Lord Ram to eliminate the scourge of the evil demons led by their king Ravana of the demon kingdom of Lanka. The Gods and Mother Earth had prayed to Lord Vishnu to protect them from Ravana’s merciless reign of terror and mayhem. In order to fulfill his promise made to them, Lord Ram was on his mission to Lanka from his capital city of Ayodhya. During his journey through the forests, he, along with his wife Sita and brother Laxman, took a break and rested for some time at a place endowed with nature’s bounty of exceptional beauty; it was called Panchvati. Sage Agastya had advised the Lord to abide here for some time, and during his retreat he must devise a device by which the next phase of his mission could be realized—which was to find out a way that would give the Lord an honourable excuse to go to Lanka and get rid of Ravana.

Lord Ram pondered over the subject and decided that the only way to get the ball rolling was to use his powerful force known as ‘Maya’ (which is the Lord’s magical cosmic powers that create an overriding sense of delusion and conjures up a world of illusions so real that even the wisest of sages are taken for a ride) and have Sita abducted by Ravana. To keep the momentum going and ensure success in his mission, the Lord decided that he would employ this Maya to the full and in such a way that no matter what happens Ravana would not see the reality and listen to no one who might advise him to give Sita back to the Lord and end hostility.

So it happened that Ravana abducted Sita and took her away to Lanka. Then Lord Ram and Laxman set out to search for her in the wilderness of the forest. By and by, they met the old vulture Jatayu who had fought valiantly to save Sita but was mortally wounded by Ravana who chopped off his wings. It was Jatayu who first gave Lord Ram information that Sita was abducted by Ravana. When Jatayu died, Lord Ram performed his last rites. {This event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 18 that precedes Doha no. 30—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 33.}

Moving ahead, Lord Ram and Laxman met a demon named Kabandha who was provided deliverance by the Lord. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand,

Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 33—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 34.}

Further on, the Lord met the old lady named Sabari who was his ardent devotee. The Lord preached her about Bhakti (devotion) and provided emancipation to her soul. Sabari directed the Lord to go to lake Pampa on the fringes of Kishkindha, the kingdom of the monkey race, where he will meet Sugriv who would help the Lord find Sita. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 34—to Doha no. 36.}

On the way to Pampa, Lord Ram was met by sage Narad. The Lord answered his questions stressing how much he cares for his devotees, and then listed some of the virtues of saints which are deemed to be present in his devotees. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 41—to Doha no. 46.}

Finally, Lord Ram and Laxman reached Mt. Rishyamook where they met Hanuman, who in turn helped to forge a bond of friendship between Sugriv, his master, and Lord Ram. Sugriv promised Lord Ram that he would do his best to help him find and recover Sita. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 5.}

Lord Ram and Laxman spent the four months of the following rainy season on a nearby mountain named Prabarshan. Then Sugriv summoned all the monkeys and bears in his realm and instructed them to go everywhere to find Sita. One group consisted of chief warriors such as Angad, Hanuman, Nala, Jamvant etc. They were especially encouraged by Sugriv who told them that they should try their best and would surely achieve success. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 21—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23.}

Lord Ram, who knew everything as he is ‘the all-knowing Supreme Being’, summoned Hanuman as he was aware that he alone would achieve success in this daunting task. The Lord gave him his finger ring as a token of identity, with an implicit instruction that he must show it to Sita to help her recognize him as the Lord’s messenger. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 23.}

The search party went southwards, and it finally reached the end of the land where their progress further was blocked by the mighty ocean. There they met Sampati, an old vulture, who, when he was told that the group had come here in search of Sita, flew high up in the sky from where he could descry her seated under a tree in the Ashok grove in the far away island kingdom of Lanka. The question now was ‘how to cross the ocean that stretched for roughly 100 Yojans or approximately 800 miles from this end to the other end’. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 27—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 29.}

Each member of the group weighed his abilities and skills against the objective to be achieved and the difficulty of the task to be performed, found himself inept and incompetent as they were unable to meet the stringent standards of efficiency and the high level of competency and skills needed to accomplish success in this formidable mission that was fraught with the gravest of dangers and ridden with untold uncertainties. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 29—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

Finally, the wisest amongst the group, Jamvant, the old bear king who is believed to be a manifestation of Brahma, the creator, picked Hanuman for the mission. Why did Jamvant chose Hanuman? Well, the answer is not far to be searched—he had seen Lord Ram calling Hanuman aside and giving him the finger ring to be taken to Sita! Well, the signal was obvious and too clear to be ignored. So Jamvant told Hanuman that the time has come for him to prove his worth and make his life fruitful by serving Lord Ram, and he need not worry at all about anything as the Lord has himself chosen him for the purpose. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 30.}

Hanuman roared like a lion ready to hunt down its prey. He expanded his body and assumed a gigantic proportion. When he asked Jamvant what was he expected to do, he was advised to go and find Sita and then come back so that Lord Ram could launch a campaign to free her. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 1-2 and Chaupai line nos. 10-12 that precede Doha no. 30.}

This point marks the end of ‘Kishkindha Kand’, which is the fourth Canto of Ram Charit Manas.

Soon, after taking permission from Jamvant and a leave of absence for a few days from his companions, Hanuman leapt atop a mountain and running from one summit to another to gather speed, and launched himself in the air like a guided missile or a drone, heading straight to Lanka.

From here begins our ‘Sundar Kand’—which is the fifth Canto of Ram Charit Manas.

Now let us commence reading the Text of Sundar Kand and its English exposition with explanatory notes.

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SUNDAR KAND

The Fifth Canto of Ram Charit Manas

By Goswami Tulsidas

[The Full Text, Roman Transliteration, Detailed English Exposition
With Notes]

पञ्चम सोपान
(सुन्दरकाण्ड)

ŚrīRāmaCaritaMānasa

pañcama sōpāna

(sundara-kāṇḍa)

श्लोक

शान्तं शाश्वतमप्रमेयमनघं निर्वाणशान्तिप्रदं
ब्रह्माशङ्गभुफणीन्द्रसेव्यमनिशं वेदान्तवेद्यं विभुम् ।
रामाख्यं जगदीश्वरं सुरगुरुं मायामनुष्यं हरिं
वन्देऽहं करुणाकरं रघुवरं भूपालचूडामणिम् ॥ १ ॥

Invocation

ślōka.

śāntaṁ śāśvatamapramēyam-anaghaṁ nirvāṇaśāntipradaṁ
brahmāśambhuphaṇīndra-sēvyamaniśaṁ vēdāntavēdyaṁ vibhum.
rāmākhyam jagadīśvaraṁ suragurum māyāmanuṣyam harim
vandē 'haṁ karuṇākaraṁ raghuvaraṁ bhūpālacūḍāmaṇim. 1.

[These two opening verses of Sundar Kand are dedicated to Lord Ram; they honour the Lord and are a brief prayer offered to him.]

I pay me deepest respects to, adore and highly revere the Lord whose name is “Ram”, and who is an embodiment of the following grand virtues: he is calm, eternal and truthful; he has no attributes in his cosmic form; he is faultless and sinless; he is the Lord who grants peace and comfort to all the gods; he is always being adored and served by Brahma (the creator), Shiva (the concluder of creation) and Sesha (the cosmic serpent who is believed to support the earth on his thousand hoods); he is the Supreme Being who can be realised with the help of the knowledge imparted in the Upanishads; he is all-pervading and all-able; he is the Lord of the entire creation; he is the guru (teacher) of the gods; he has assumed a human form out of his own free will; he is also known as ‘Hari’ (literally one who steals or removes the worries, pain and grief of his devotees; one of the many names of Lord Vishnu, the sustainer and protector of creation); he is a treasury of compassion, mercy and kindness; and he is like a gem in the illustrious family of the legendary king Raghu of Ayodhya. (1)

नान्या स्पृहा रघुपते हृदयेऽस्मदीये
सत्यं वदामि च भवानखिलान्तरात्मा ।
भक्तिं प्रयच्छ रघुपुङ्गव निर्भरां मे
कामादिदोषरहितं कुरु मानसं च ॥ २ ॥

nān'yā sprhā raghupatē hrdayē 'smadiyē
satyaṁ vadāmi ca bhavānakhilāntarātmā.
bhaktiṁ prayaccha raghupuṅgava nirbharāṁ mē
kāmadidōṣarahitaṁ kuru mānasaṁ ca. 2.

Oh Lord Raghupati (i.e. Lord Ram)! I assert once again and pray to you—and you too know that I am speaking the truth because you live in the heart of all living beings as their Atma (soul), and therefore you are fully aware of the truth of my statement—that there is no other desire left in my heart except to have undiluted and eternal form of devotion for you, and that my heart be freed from all spiritual taints such as Kaam (lust, passion, and other forms of worldly desires) etc¹. (2)

[Note—¹The chief spiritual faults that taint the inner-self of a living being and tie his soul to this material world are: Kaam (worldly desires; passion and lust), Krodha (anger), Lobha (greed), Moha (attachments; delusions; infatuations).]

अतुलितबलधामं हेमशैलाभदेहं
दनुजवनकृशानुं ज्ञानिनामग्रगण्यम् ।
सकलगुणनिधानं वानराणामधीशं
रघुपतिप्रियभक्तं वातजातं नमामि ॥ ३ ॥

atulitabaladhāmaṁ hēmaśailābhadēhaṁ
danujavanakṛśānuṁ jñānināmagraganyaṁ.

sakalaguṇanidhānaṁ vānarāṇāmadhīśaṁ
raghupatipriyabhaktaṁ vātajātaṁ namāmi. 3.

[This verse is dedicated to Lord Hanuman. It honours him and his glories, and is a sort of a brief but universal prayer offered to Hanuman.]

I pay my obeisance to and honour the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) who is an embodiment of matchless strength and valour, who has a radiant and glowing form that resembles a huge mountain of glittering gold, who is like a raging fire that destroys a forest represented by the demons, who is the most exalted and the first in the rank of those who are highly skilled and exceptionally knowledgeable, wise, enlightened and intelligent, who is an ocean or a treasury of all the grand virtues and excellent qualities, who is the Lord of the monkeys, and who is an excellent and a favoured messenger of Lord Ram. (3)

चौ०. जामवंत के बचन सुहाए । सुनि हनुमंत हृदय अति भाए ॥ १ ॥
तब लगि मोहि परिखेहु तुम्ह भाई । सहि दुख कंद मूल फल खाई ॥ २ ॥
जब लगि आवौं सीतहि देखी । होइहि काजु मोहि हरष बिसेषी ॥ ३ ॥
यह कहि नाइ सबन्हि कहूँ माथा । चलेउ हरषि हियँ धरि रघुनाथा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

jā mavanta kē bacana suhā'ē. suni hanumanta hr̥daya ati bhā'ē. 1.
taba lagi mōhi parikhēhu tumha bhā'ī. sahi dukha kanda mūla phala khā'ī. 2.
jaba lagi āvaur̥ṁ sītahi dēkhī. hō'ihi kāju mōhi haraṣa bisēṣī. 3.
yaha kahi nā'i sabanhi kahum̐ māthā. calē'u haraṣi hiyam̐ dhari raghunāthā. 4.

[We must recall here what Jamvant had told Hanuman earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-12 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 30, that he had the privilege to be the chosen one to do the work of Lord Ram, which was to go and meet Sita and then return to convey the good news about her to the Lord. Thus inspired and motivated, Hanuman, the fortunate son of the wind-god, immediately proceeded to accomplish the task assigned to him as follows—]

Jamvant's words were welcomed by Hanuman who received them with a cheerful and gladdened heart¹. (1)

Hanuman said, 'Brothers! Wait for me till the time I come back after meeting Sita. During the intervening period, cope with a little hardship and sustain yourselves somehow by eating fruits and edible roots [2], because a sixth sense makes me feel certain that the work will be done successfully as my heart is feeling cheerful, thrilled and elated as it usually happens when one is about to embark on an auspicious mission that is destined to be successful [3].²' (2-3)

Saying thus, Hanuman bowed his head to all his brethrens, invoked Lord Ram and enshrined the Lord's divine image in his heart, and proceeded on his mission³. (4)

[Note—¹Jamvant had made two points—viz. (i) first he had praised Hanuman and encouraged him by saying that his birth itself was for doing Lord Ram's work, so he must no longer procrastinate, but rather act swiftly to go across the ocean to find out about Sita's exact whereabouts (Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 30), (ii) and second, to just go and meet Sita and inform her about the latest situation, assuring her that soon Lord Ram would come himself with an army to free her from captivity (Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10-12 and Chanda line no. 1 that precede Doha no. 30).

These two pieces of advice gladdened Hanuman's heart as he felt exceptionally happy that he had been selected for this prestigious project.

²These verses show that Hanuman had full confidence in attaining success in the effort of seeing Sita. When a person does any thing with confidence and certainty of success, with his heart and mind fully devoted to the project at hand, than the chances of his actually attaining success are extremely high, as compared to when he does any thing half-heartedly and with an uncertain mind.

³The message is clear—when a person is about to start on a new project or enterprise, when he is just about to launch himself on a journey fraught with all sorts of uncertainties and dangers, the best insurance for success and the guard against failures he has is to remember the Lord God, the deity whom he worships and reveres, offer himself to the Lord, and then proceed with a cheerful and confident heart—success would be his.]

सिंधु तीर एक भूधर सुंदर । कौतुक कूदि चढ़ेउ ता ऊपर ॥ ५ ॥
 बार बार रघुबीर सँभारी । तरकेउ पवनतनय बल भारी ॥ ६ ॥
 जेहिं गिरि चरन देइ हनुमंता । चलेउ सो गा पाताल तुरंता ॥ ७ ॥
 जिमि अमोघ रघुपति कर बाना । एही भाँति चलेउ हनुमाना ॥ ८ ॥

sindhu tīra ēka bhūdhara sundara. kautuka kūdi carhē'u tā ūpara. 5.
 bāra bāra raghubīra sambhārī. tarakē'u pavanatanaya bala bhārī. 6.
 jēhīn giri carana dē'i hanumantā. calē'u sō gā pātāla turantā. 7.
 jimi amōgha raghupati kara bānā. ēhī bhām̐ti calē'u hanumānā. 8.

There was a beautiful hill on the shore of the ocean; Hanuman sprang up to its summit with swift and light steps as if he was playing a sport. (5)

Remembering Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) and submitting himself to the Lord's care repeatedly (bāra bāra raghubīra sambhārī), Hanuman, who had immense strength and energy, jumped on it like a powerful spring (of a catapult that is about to launch a ball across the sky). (6)

[In order to gain momentum and thrust, Hanuman leapt from one hill to another in the chain of hills that dotted the shore.] Whichever hill Hanuman placed his foot upon and sprang from it to the next one, that hill sank deep down into the bowls of the earth instantly (calē'u sō gā pātāla turantā)¹. (7)

In this way, Hanuman zoomed across the sky like an invincible arrow of Lord Ram streaking towards its target. [To wit, Hanuman was moving very speedily and in a straight line across the sky like an arrow would fly.] (8)

[Note—¹As Hanuman jumped from one hill to another to gain speed and traction, and during each such jump he increased his upward and forward thrust like a rocket that is about to be launched from its pad and head skyward, each of these hills sank in to the earth by the downward thrust exerted by his huge, bulky and muscular body before it finally became air-borne! The soil near the ocean was not as hard and solid as it is in the upcountry plains because water of the ocean made the earth soft around the shore. So when a pressure was exerted by Hanuman during his launch, these hills ‘sank’ in the soil instead of crumbling into rocky pieces.

In the period of history to which we are referring in this grand epical Story, the coast of the ocean bordering the southern edge of the landmass of the Indian continent would have certainly been different from what it is today, for the timeline we allude to was hundreds and thousands of years in the past. The shore-line had a chain of small and large protuberances, such as hills, hillocks, outcrops, cliffs and reefs, spreading for quite a distance not only along its length and extending back for many miles up-land, but even jutting out into the water itself like gigantic natural piers and breakwaters.

Hanuman raced up these protuberances with a spring in his steps as he gradually picked up speed to gain momentum and traction till he reached the last hill or reef or cliff or outcrop which was the highest point along the line, and from here he made his giant leap into the air to become air-borne. Once in the air, he cruised in a straight line like the crow flies in order not to waste a single unit of his energy to cover even a single extra mile by making any deviation from this straight line. When it is said that he moved like Lord Ram’s arrow it is meant that “he flew through the sky with great speed and in a straight line” because this is how any arrow would fly.]

जलनिधि रघुपति दूत बिचारी । तैं मैनाक होहि श्रमहारी ॥ ९ ॥

jalaniidhi raghupati dūta bicārī. taim̐ maināka hōhi śramahārī. 9.

The Ocean (jalaniidhi), (or its patron deity), realised that he (Hanuman) was Lord Ram’s messenger; so he asked Mt. Mainak to prepare itself to give some rest to this messenger during the journey¹. (9)

[Note—¹Here, the ‘ocean’ has been personified. If not the ocean’s water than at least its patron deity, the Varun-God, saw that Lord Ram’s messenger, Hanuman, was on a mission for the Lord. Wishing to give Hanuman some sort of rest mid-way, the ocean or its patron deity requested a mountain located somewhere in the middle of the ocean to allow Hanuman to alight on it and take some rest before he moves ahead.

The ocean was willing to help Lord Ram’s messenger because it owed its existence to one of the ancestors of the Lord, a great King of the Ikshwaku dynasty who was known as ‘Sāgar’, from whom the ocean derived its vernacular name ‘sāgar’.

The story of creation of ‘sagar’ is closely related to the story of ‘river Ganges’ coming down to earth from heaven. It is briefly as follows: King Sagar had done a

great horse sacrifice known as ‘Ashwamedh Yagya’. This sacrificial horse was stolen by Indra, the king of Gods who was renowned for his mischief and jealous nature, in the guise of a demon. The reason was that king Sagar had already done 99 such sacrifices, and if he successfully completed this 100th sacrifice, he would have become eligible for the stature of Indra. This Indra could not tolerate.

King Sagar ordered his sixty thousand sons to go and find the horse. They dug-up the entire earth in search of this horse. Though they failed in their effort to find the concerned horse, but the earth that they dug-up formed the ‘great hollow’ that would be filled with water to form the ‘ocean’, which is like a great lake covering three-fourths of the surface of earth.]

दो०. हनूमान तेहि परसा कर पुनि कीन्ह प्रनाम ।

राम काजु कीन्हें बिनु मोहि कहाँ बिश्राम ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

hanūmāna tēhi parasā kara puni kīnha pranāma.
rāma kāju kīnhēm binu mōhi kahām̐ bīśrāma. 1.

Hanuman merely touched Mainak with his hands (without spending any precious time resting on it) and bowed before it to pay his respects.

[When Mainak asked him to take some rest—] Hanuman told the Mountain, ‘How can I take rest before completing Lord Ram’s work?’¹ (Doha no. 1)

[Note—¹We must note here that even inanimate entities such as the ocean and the mountain have assumed an animate form to speak. This is in accordance with ancient style of writing poetry where inanimate things are given life and breath by the poet, enabling them to communicate emotions and sentiments that the poet likes to convey himself through these mediums.

This fact of Mt. Mainak assuming a human form is specifically mentioned in Valmiki’s Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 111-112.

Mt. Mainak was a friend of the Wind-God, and so he was willing to help the latter’s son Hanuman. Refer: Valmiki’s Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 131-132.

This action of the Mountain pleased Indra, the king of the gods, who thanked him and told him that in future he need not have any fear from his weapon known as Vajra, the thunderbolt. Refer: Valmiki’s Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 137-140.

Ancient legend holds that in earlier times, mountains could fly like birds. Indra did not like it, so he threw his thunderbolt at the flying mountains to cut their wings so that they became stationery. However, Mainak managed to escape because with the aid of its friend the wind-god it moved with tremendous speed ahead of the thunderbolt and hid itself under the water of the ocean where it was very deep, i.e. in its middle. This way, Mt. Mainak became obliged to both the Ocean and the Wind-God. Hence, when the time came to repay his debts, Mainak was more than willing, especially since Hanuman was, besides being the son of the wind-god, also the messenger of Lord Ram, the Supreme Being.

Mt. Mainak was situated in the middle of the ocean for the reason cited above—i.e. at a distance midway between the shore of the ocean that bordered the

northern continent, and the shore that lined the land of the island of Lanka. To wit, it was situated roughly 50 Yojans from the either shores.

Therefore, by the time Hanuman reached this mountain he had covered half of the total distance to Lanka, i.e. approximately 50 Yojans out of the total 100 Yojans.

A very important lesson is learnt here—it is that we must not allow ourselves to become lax, careless and weary, or be distracted by anything no matter how tempting it may be, before we reach our objective. We must strive tirelessly and relentlessly to achieve our goal, and not let our guard down somewhere midway, as no one can say if such breaks may not take the wind out of the sail of success and ground the ship.]

चौ०. जात पवनसुत देवन्ह देखा । जानैं कहूँ बल बुद्धि बिसेषा ॥ १ ॥
 सुरसा नाम अहिन्ह कै माता । पठइन्हि आइ कही तेहिं बाता ॥ २ ॥
 आजु सुरन्ह मोहि दीन्ह अहारा । सुनत बचन कह पवनकुमारा ॥ ३ ॥
 राम काजु करि फिरि मैं आवौं । सीता कइ सुधि प्रभुहि सुनावौं ॥ ४ ॥
 तब तव बदन पैठिहउँ आई । सत्य कहउँ मोहि जान दे माई ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

jāta pavanasuta dēvanha dēkhā. jānaim kahum̃ bala bud'dhi bisēṣā. 1.
 surasā nāma ahinha kai mātā. paṭha'inhi ā'i kahī tēhim̃ bātā. 2.
 āju suranha mōhi dīnha ahārā. sunata bacana kaha pavanakumārā. 3.
 rāma kāju kari phiri maim̃ āvaum̃. sītā ka'i sudhi prabhuhi sunāvaum̃. 4.
 taba tava badana paiṭhiha'um̃ āī. satya kaha'um̃ mōhi jāna dē māī. 5.

When the gods saw that the son of the wind-god was on his way, they wished to ascertain whether he had the necessary strength, wit, intelligence and maneuverability to be successful in the mission¹. (1)

So these gods sent Sursa, the mother of the serpents, to test Hanuman. She came and stood in his way, saying—(2)

‘Today the gods have given me sufficient food (for I shall gobble up this creature and satisfy my hunger).’

When the son of the wind-god (Hanuman) heard her say this, he replied—(3)

‘I will accomplish Lord Ram’s work and return, then I will go and inform the Lord about Sita and her well-being, --- (4)

--- After that, I will come and offer myself to you voluntarily by entering your stomach (i.e. I shall allow you to eat me whole, and I will cheerfully surrender myself to you for this purpose).

I promise to you mother that what I say is the truth, and trust me that I will truly do what I say to you, but I beg you to let me go ahead now and wait till I come back to you once again.², (5)

[Note—¹The mission was exceptionally tough, and the enemy equally formidable. Hanuman was about to enter, all alone and unarmed, the citadel of the ferocious and

vicious demons! The Gods were worried if he would actually succeed; they knew how strong and powerful Ravana was, and to overcome such a formidable adversary it was absolutely essential to have a level of strength and power that exceeded the opponent so that he can be outwitted. So the gods held a quick parley and decided to test Hanuman's eligibility, his aptitude and intelligence, to determine if he needed some extra help from them, for which they must prepare in advance, or if he would accomplish the mission successfully independently. They thought that it was better to be on the safe side and take precautionary measures—but the need of the hour was to judge what sort of help was needed to be extended to Hanuman, and for this he must first be tested.

²A very remarkable statement by Hanuman—it shows his commitment, dedication and devotion to his duty as well as to his Lord. He is not afraid of death; he would rather willingly embrace it, but what bothers him most was the fear of failure to carry out his Lord's orders and serve him fully before dying, because if this happens and Sursa eats him before he finishes the mission then he would not be able to get a chance of being blessed by Lord Ram, which in turn would entitle him to attain deliverance, emancipation and salvation.

Besides this, he wished to see his beloved Lord Ram for one last time before dying. That is why he asked Sursa to give him some time so that he could first meet Sita, convey her news to Lord Ram, and pay his last respects to his beloved Lord before taking leave from him to come back and offer himself to her for feeding her hunger!

This first test proved to the gods that Hanuman does not fear death, that he was totally devoted to Lord Ram and committed to carry out the Lord's command with due diligence and faith, and that he is not haughty and egoist.

The next group of verses herein below will show that though Hanuman was humble and polite, yet he was not to be taken for granted, because if he was not allowed to do what he thought was right and correct then he had the ability and the intelligence, the wit and the craft, to out-manuever his opponent and bring the latter to heel.]

कवनेहुँ जतन देइ नहिं जाना । ग्रससि न मोहि कहेउ हनुमाना ॥ ६ ॥
 जोजन भरि तेहिं बदन पसारा । कपि तनु कीन्ह दुगुन बिस्तारा ॥ ७ ॥
 सोरह जोजन मुख तेहिं ठयऊ । तुरत पवनसुत बतिस भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥
 जस जस सुरसा बदन बढावा । तासु दून कपि रूप देखावा ॥ ९ ॥
 सत जोजन तेहिं आनन कीन्हा । अति लघु रूप पवनसुत लीन्हा ॥ १० ॥

kavanēhum' jatana dē'i nahim jānā. grasasi na mōhi kahē'u hanumānā. 6.
 jōjana bhari tēhim badanu pasārā. kapi tanu kīnha duguna bistārā. 7.
 sōraha jōjana mukha tēhim ṭhaya'ū. turata pavanāsuta battisa bhaya'ū. 8.
 jasa jasa surasā badanu baṛhāvā. tāsu dūna kapi rūpa dēkhāvā. 9.
 sata jōjana tēhim ānana kīnhā. ati laghu rūpa pavanāsuta līnhā. 10.

No matter how hard Hanuman tried to politely persuade Sursa and convince her to allow him to proceed, she would not listen to him, and stood blocking his way.

Finally he decided that it was enough. So at last Hanuman bluntly told her, ‘You will not devour me. [Listen, oh wretch of a woman! It seems you are hell-bent for a showdown. Come, face it now you evil one. Let me see how you can put me in your hideous mouth!]’ (6)

Thus challenged, Sursa expanded her body for one yojan (roughly 8 miles)¹. The Kapi (Hanuman) immediately enlarged his body to twice that dimension (i.e. Hanuman expanded his body for 16 miles). (7)

Peeved and angry, Sursa expanded herself so much that her mouth opened wide to measure sixteen yojans (128 miles). [Sursa opened her mouth so wide that its diameter was about 128 miles.]

Not to be outwitted, the son of the wind-god instantly enlarged his body to measure thirty-two yojans (256 miles). (8)

As Sursa continued to increase the size of her body (mouth) progressively, the Kapi (Hanuman) enlarged his body instantly to twice that dimension². (9)

When finally Sursa had expanded her body so much so that the hollow cavity of her yawning mouth measured one hundred yojans (roughly 800 miles in diameter), the son of the wind-god suddenly reduced his body to a miniature size (i.e. he immediately shrank his huge body to revert back to its original size, or even smaller than what it actually was)³. (10)

[Note—¹Sursa expanded her body for “one yojan”—which actually means her ‘mouth and stomach’ were enlarged to a sufficient size that would enable her to devour Hanuman wholly. This clearly implies that Hanuman’s own form was roughly of this size, or a little smaller than one yojan. We have already read that at the time Jamvant inspired Hanuman to get ready to do Lord Ram’s work and praised him, Hanuman had assumed a colossus size. It was his bulky and muscular form that had played a crucial role in making the hills, hillocks, cliffs and reefs sink into the earth when he ran across their tops in leaps and bounds in order to gain momentum, speed and thrust to acquire the lift that was needed to launch himself into the air from the shore of the ocean. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 30.

²The reader must remember that we are reading of events occurring in some long gone era when mountains could sink, vultures and monkeys could speak the human tongue, warriors used bows and arrows that never seemed to end in numbers, when great sages and ascetics lived in forests to do sacrifices and practice meditation, when certain forms of creatures could change their forms and go anywhere they wished by using the transcendental path of movement, and so on and so forth. There is no wonder or fantasy in anything that we describe in this Book as happening during that era as the mind may not be able to fully understand or even imagine certain things which it has not actually seen or experienced in the present world, things to which it is not exposed or accustomed to. For instance, even a hundred or so years back it would have been difficult for a person to imagine and believe that one day there will be a certain thing called a mobile or cell phone, or internet, or computer or the so many other wonders of science that have completely revolutionized life in the world.

If a hot air balloon can be inflated to a multi-storey size and made to lift in the air and float, it is certainly possible that the body of a creature, which also has wind inside it in the form of breath and other vital airs, and is definitely hot from the within, can be expanded. Everyone can expand his chest and abdomen by at least a few inches by inhaling deeply, though in today's world we lack the knowledge to do anything further. But that does not mean that in earlier times men had not mastered the art of expanding their bodies to whatever size they wished, and even time-travel using the transcendental path of movement.

In which direction did Sursa extend her body? Well, obviously it was in the latitudinal or vertical direction for the simple reason that Hanuman, whom she wished to put into her mouth whole, was standing before her, and not lying prostrate in which case she would have been compelled to expand herself in the longitudinal or horizontal direction.

To wit, when she had finally reached the maximum expansion of her body it stood at a height of 800 miles from the surface of the ocean!

³This trick of Hanuman proved to the gods that he was exceptionally witty and clever enough to out-manoeuvre his opponent. First he enlarged his body to such an extent that even if Sursa wanted she would not be able to eat him as every time his body was twice as large as Sursa's mouth, so he wouldn't fit into it. When she grew to such a huge size that extended for 800 miles into the sky like a gigantic tower bulging around its middle to represent her wide open mouth—mind you, this length is not a joke, for it extended high up into the blue sky, almost touching the outer ring of the atmosphere—her eyes would have become so large and situated so high up from the surface of the earth that she would fail to see anything low down on the surface of the ocean, close to her chin.

At this point, when Hanuman suddenly, and without any hint, reduced his size to the ordinary, he seemed to virtually vanish from the level of vision of Sursa's massive eyeballs; she suddenly realized to her dismay that she couldn't see him. She rolled her eyes wildly in search of Hanuman, like a gigantic planet spinning rapidly in the middle of the Milky Way.]

बदन पड़ि पुनि बाहेर आवा । मागा बिदा ताहि सिरु नावा ॥ ११ ॥

मोहि सुरन्ह जेहि लागि पठावा । बुधि बल मरमु तोर मैं पावा ॥ १२ ॥

badana pa'iṭhi puni bāhēra āvā. māgā bidā tāhi siru nāvā. 11.

mōhi suranha jēhi lāgi paṭhāvā. budhi bala maramu tōra mair̥m pāvā. 12.

[Then, in deference to Sursa's wish, whom he had already addressed as a 'mother' in verse no. 5, Hanuman played another trick.] He entered her body and came out of it (swiftly, unopposed and unstopped)¹.

Then he bowed his head to her (because he had already called her a 'mother') and asked her to grant him leave to proceed². (11)

Sursa was pleased. She exclaimed, 'I have ascertained (judged) the extent of your wit, intelligence and strength (i.e. your competence and skills) for which the gods had sent me. [To wit, I have found out that you are fully eligible to accomplish Lord Ram's

work; you will successfully do it as you have the brains and the guts for it. Moreover, since you have shown me respect, I also bless you.] (12)

[Note—¹To wit, Sursa was at present 800 miles high; so she could not know or feel that anything of as small a size as an ordinary creature had entered and then exited from her colossus cavern-like mouth. So Hanuman easily entered and came out from her mouth.

²By doing this, Hanuman fulfilled Sursa's wish—which was that she wanted to devour him wholly and put him inside her mouth. He had called Sursa a 'mother' as a show of respect to a woman (refer: Chaupai line no. 5 herein above), but once she was called a 'mother' it became obligatory for Hanuman to fulfill her wishes. So he entered her mouth.

Addressing Sursa as a 'mother' was a highly commendable act of Hanuman as it proved that he had no intention of insulting her, and he confronted and challenged her only because she was creating a hurdle in his path. He had even offered to come back to let her eat him, but she still wouldn't budge. Hence, Hanuman had no choice left to him.

This test showed to the gods that Hanuman knew how to respect even to his enemies, a character that is exceptionally noble and rarely found in a person. Only a great warrior and a noble person of high birth and great heart would know to show due respect to his opponent, especially after defeating him, as Hanuman had bowed to Sursa and sought permission from her to move ahead 'even after' subduing her.]

दो०. राम काजु सबु करिहु तुम्ह बल बुद्धि निधान ।

आसिष देइ गई सो हरषि चलेउ हनुमान ॥ २ ॥

dōhā.

rāma kāju sabu karihahu tumha bala bud'dhi nidhāna.

āsiṣa dē'i ga'ī sō haraṣi calē'u hanumāna. 2.

[Sursa said—] I bless you that you will successfully do all of Lord Ram's works¹ as you are a treasury of (i.e. you possess immense) strength, intelligence, wit and skill needed for the purpose.'

After blessing him Sursa went her way, and then Hanuman too resumed his journey with an exhilarated heart. (Doha no. 2)

[Note—¹While blessing Hanuman Sursa has said a very interesting thing—she has prophesized that he would do “all the works” of Lord Ram—“rāma kāju sabu karihahu”. Presently he had only one work at hand—which was to see where Sita was and report back to the Lord. Even Jamvant had expressly told him that this was the only thing he was required to do. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

So now it was predicted that not only success in this mission was a foregone conclusion but many other such missions would be successfully done by Hanuman on behalf of Lord Ram.

This was the reason why Hanuman felt so joyous in his heart as he resumed his onward journey—“haraṣi calē'u hanumāna”.]

चौ०. निसिचरि एक सिंधु महँ रहई । करि माया नभु के खग गहई ॥ १ ॥
 जीव जंतु जे गगन उड़ाहीं । जल बिलोकि तिन्ह कै परिछाहीं ॥ २ ॥
 गहइ छाहँ सक सो न उड़ाई । एहि बिधि सदा गगनचर खाई ॥ ३ ॥
 सोइ छल हनूमान कहँ कीन्हा । तासु कपटु कपि तुरतहिं चीन्हा ॥ ४ ॥
 ताहि मारि मारुतसुत बीरा । बारिधि पार गयउ मतिधीरा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

nisicari ēka sindhu mahum̐ raha'ī. kari māyā nabhu kē khaga gaha'ī. 1.
 jīva jantu jē gagana urāhīm̐. jala bilōki tinha kai parichāhīm̐. 2.
 gaha'i chāham̐ saka sō na urā'ī. ēhi bidhi sadā gaganacara khā'ī. 3.
 sō'i chala hanūmāna kham̐ kīnhā. tāsū kapaṭu kapi turatahīm̐ cīnhā. 4.
 tāhi mārī mārutasuta bīrā. bāridhi pāra gaya'u matidhīrā. 5.

[After overcoming the first obstacle in the way, i.e. Sursa, Hanuman was confronted with another formidable one in the form of a demoness who had the power to pull down anything flying over the surface of the ocean by holding its shadow which fell on the surface of the water as that object flew overhead. This was Ravana's way of ensuring security of his city of Lanka. In modern-day world we can visualize this phenomenon in the form of a military radar that would automatically capture images of all flying objects within the air space of a country, and a robotic instrument operating in sync with it that would automatically pull down or disable the intruding object by some kind of ray or use of powerful magnets.]

In the ocean there lived a female demon¹ who would use her magical powers to capture birds ("khaga"; or anything that flew over the ocean). (1)

Any creature such as birds and insects or any other kind of living being (jīva jantu) that flew in the sky overhead, and if the demoness could see its shadow falling on the water of the ocean, --- (2)

--- She would hold the shadow so that the creature could not fly and proceed further. In this way she used to regularly eat those who lived and moved in the sky (gaganacara). (3)

As was her wont, she employed her usual trick on Hanuman, but unfortunately for her the Kapi (Hanuman) immediately recognized it². (4)

So the valiant, brave and courageous son of the wind-god (Hanuman) immediately killed her³. After that (there being no other hindrance on the way), he, with a calm and stable mind (matidhīrā), crossed the ocean which was a huge and endless reservoir of water (bāridhi). [To wit, after slaying this demoness, Hanuman landed on the soil of Lanka un-opposed. The obstacles he had encountered en-route had not at all affected his composure and stability of mind.]⁴ (5)

[Note—¹This second obstacle was different than the one Hanuman met a little while ago. The first one, Sursa, was not a “demoness”; she was the mother of serpents, but this lady whom Hanuman met now was one of the race of demons. Sursa was sent by the gods to test Hanuman’s eligibility for the great task at hand, but this demoness was appointed by Ravana or one of his commanders to safeguard the borders of the island of Lanka.

So therefore, this demoness would not stop any demon flying overhead; she would stop only the non-demons.

The story goes that this demoness was known by the name of “Singhika”. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 35.} She was the daughter of the demon Hiranyakshyap and a wife of the demon Viprachiti. Her son was the demon Rahu who, according to mythology, is known to devour the sun and the moon gods that cause the solar and lunar eclipses respectively. Singhika had the ability, like all members of the demon race, that enabled her to assume any form she wanted, and a special power to catch and pull down any flying object by holding its shadow, an ability that made her unique. This singular skill of hers was the reason why Ravana selected her to guard his borders from the ocean which formed a sort of an intractable moat that ringed his capital of Lanka.

We can say that like a child pulls down his kite with the help of its string, this demoness could pull down the flying object by catching hold of an invisible subtle link that existed between that object and its shadow that fell on the surface of the water of the ocean.

As we have already noted in the introductory paragraph to these verses, some kind of magnetic radiation or other form of energy such as some kind of ray was employed by this demoness to stop and pull down the object which cast the shadow. Singhika lived below the surface of the water, and as soon natural light falling on the surface of the ocean was obstructed by the a dark patch of the shadow she would know that something was flying overhead, and then she would immediately activate her holding mechanism.

²Hanuman was flying with a certain regular speed. So when he suddenly found that something was dragging him and pulling him down, he realized that there was something amiss. When he looked down he saw the gaping hole of the mouth of this wicked demoness waiting for the flying object to fall down straight into her mouth.

She must have resembled a huge shark or whale floating on the ocean with its jaws wide open.

³So without wasting any time Hanuman killed her. Valmiki’s Ramayan says that Hanuman entered her wide open mouth and ferociously tore through her mouth and gullet with his sharp pointed nails so she bled profusely and died instantly. Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse nos. 181-191.

In Adhyatma Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 38, Hanuman had killed her by kicking at her violently.

⁴This demoness, Singhika, was the last obstacle for Hanuman. As we have noted in our reading, Mt. Mainak was located at half the distance to Lanka; then came Sursa first and Singhika second. Singhika was stationed nearer to the shore of Lanka as she was a member of the demon race and appointed by Ravana, the king of the demons, with a special mandate to guard the coast of the island from somewhere offshore.

The point to be noted here is that Hanuman was so confident of himself that inspite of facing formidable obstacles he did not lose his self-control, poise and mental balance as he, being prudent, wise and intelligent, knew fully well that these virtues were necessary to succeed in any enterprise.

Once again, the gods, who were watching the proceedings silently from heaven, cheered and applauded Hanuman. They were overjoyed to discover that the son of the wind-god was absolutely fit to do the job for which he had been selected—for Hanuman had wit and intelligence, strength and power, calmness and self-control, steadfastness and diligence, fearlessness and boldness, and the ability to handle odd situations as and when they present themselves even unannounced.]

तहाँ जाइ देखी बन सोभा । गुंजत चंचरीक मधु लोभा ॥ ६ ॥
 नाना तरु फल फूल सुहाए । खग मृग बृंद देखि मन भाए ॥ ७ ॥
 सैल बिसाल देखि एक आगें । ता पर धाइ चढ़ेउ भय त्यागें ॥ ८ ॥

tahām̐ jā'i dēkhī bana sōbhā. guṇjata cañcarīka madhu lōbhā. 6.
 nānā taru phala phūla suhā'ē. khaga mṛga bṛnda dēkhi mana bhā'ē. 7.
 saila bisāla dēkhi ēka āgēm̐. tā para dhā'i caṛhē'u bhaya tyāgēm̐. 8.

When he landed on the other side of the ocean he saw a magnificent sight there. He saw beautiful forests where honey-bees were buzzing around coveting sources of honey. (6)

He saw different kinds of beautiful trees, fruits and flowers, as well as wonderful birds and animals—the pleasant sight of all these things cheered Hanuman's heart¹. (7)

In the front of him Hanuman saw a huge hill; so he sprang forward and ran to its top fearlessly². (8)

[Note—¹Though Lanka was notorious as being the capital city of the demon race who were cruel and blood-thirsty, who relished plunder and laying to waste cities and villages, killing and burning what came their way, yet they ensured that their own capital was well-maintained and looked after. The very entrance of Lanka presented a very enchanting sight with its verdantly rich forests, colourful trees and flowers, sweet fruits, buzzing honey-bees, and cheerful birds and animals who roamed around fearlessly.

The demons ate flesh of animals and humans, but they spared the animals and birds in their own gardens, forests and parks. Ravana's own royal garden where he had held Sita captive was exceptionally beautiful, vying with the garden of heaven.

²Which hill was this? It was not an ordinary 'hill', but one of huge size, almost like a 'mountain'. Hence it was aptly called 'Mt. Subel'. It was so high that it gave Hanuman a panoramic view of Lanka. It was one of the three high hills or mountains that formed the kingdom of the demons called 'Lanka'. The other two mountains were called 'Trikoṭ' and 'Sundar'.

Later on in the story we shall read that when Lord Ram landed on the soil of Lanka with his army, he too mounted this Mt. Subel and pitched his camp here. It was

from here that he could have a good view of the capital city of the demon kingdom of Lanka that was situated on the second mountain called Trikoot which was on the south of Subel. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 11; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13.}

उमा न कछु कपि कै अधिकाई । प्रभु प्रताप जो कालहि खाई ॥ ९ ॥
गिरि पर चढ़ि लंका तेहि देखी । कहि न जाइ अति दुर्ग बिसेषी ॥ १० ॥
अति उतंग जलनिधि चहु पासा । कनक कोट कर परम प्रकासा ॥ ११ ॥

umā na kachu kapi kai adhiḱā'ī. prabhu pratāpa jō kālahi khā'ī. 9.
giri para caḍhi laṅkā tēhiṁ dēkhī. kahi na jā'i ati durga bisēṣī. 10.
ati utaṅga jalanidhi cahu pāsā. kanaka kōṭa kara parama prakāsā. 11.

[Lord Shiva, who is the principal narrator of this epic Story, told his listener Uma, his consort—] Listen Uma; there is no wonder or any special credit that can be assigned to the Kapi (Hanuman) for the marvelous things that had happened—for all of it was achieved owing to Lord Ram's own cosmic powers that are so stupendous in proportion and astounding in their abilities that they do not spare even Kaal, the god of death¹. (9)

When Hanuman reached to top of the hill (that overlooked the city), he looked at the city of Lanka from this vantage point. He saw that its fort was so remarkable that no words could describe it². (10)

The ocean with its heaving waves surrounded the city and its fort from all sides like a gigantic moat. The fort itself had very high walls, with its turrets and ramparts shining brilliantly from the light reflecting from their gilded surfaces³. (11)

[Note—¹To wit, Shiva told Uma that she need not be surprised at the miraculous way Hanuman crossed the mighty ocean after overcoming formidable obstacles, and still retained his calm and vigour as nothing had happened when he landed in Lanka because he was feeling so relaxed and energized as if he had just stood up from rest. There was nothing to be astonished that Hanuman had no fear while entering the dense forest in enemy's land, and crossing it to its other end where he saw a huge hill on which he jumped without fear of any kind, such as being caught or attacked by the ferocious and vicious demons. For indeed, the credit for all these unimaginable events goes to Lord Ram's cosmic mystical powers that are truly so great as they are able to control the working of the entire universe itself. Nay, not only this, but they are so strong that they can even devour the god of death, known as Kaal, himself.

This being the case, crossing the ocean, or defeating the demoness, or moving in forest of Lanka fearlessly, and going on the top of one of its hills that overlooked the city without the fear of being caught or attacked by the demons were inconsequential deeds of Hanuman as he was acting on the behalf of Lord Ram himself, and not on his own accord.

²Refer a note appended to Chaupai line no. 8 herein above regarding this 'hill' on which Hanuman climbed to have a panoramic view of Lanka.

³The view from the top of the hill was fantastic and enthralling. On one side was the forest through which Hanuman had just traveled, on the opposite side was a huge gilded fort encircling a magnificent city that resembled a land of fairies, as one of the fabulous cities described in “The One Thousand and One Arabian Nights”. It was situated in the middle of the ocean which formed a natural moat around it. This made Lanka an impregnable citadel for the demons.

The magnificence and grandeur of the capital city of Lanak, named after the demon kingdom bearing the same name, has also been alluded to in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 178 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

To wit, the present set of verses present a panoramic view of the grand and golden city of Lanka that was famed for its grandeur and magnificence, a city that rivaled Heaven, the city of the gods in general, and Amravati, the city of Indra, the king of gods, in particular.]

छं०. कनक कोट बिचित्र मनि कृत सुंदरायतना घना । १ ।
चउहट्ट हट्ट सुबट्ट बीथीं चारु पुर बहु बिधि बना ॥ २ ॥
गज बाजि खच्चर निकर पदचर रथ बरूथन्हि को गनै । ३ ।
बहुरूप निसिचर जूथ अतिबल सेन बरनत नहिं बनै ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

kanaka kōṭa bicitra mani kṛta sundarāyatanā ghanā. 1.
ca'uhaṭṭa haṭṭa subaṭṭa bīthīm cāru pura bahu bidhi banā. 2.
gaja bāji khaccara nikara padacara ratha barūthanhi kō ganai. 3.
bahurūpa niscara jūtha atibala sēna baranata nahim banai. 4.

The surrounding wall of the city (the ramparts of the fort) were gilded and inlaid with precious stones of different kinds. It had, at intervals, many grand towers and tall turrets of immense dimensions. (Chanda line no. 1)

The magnificent city itself had broad squares, wonderful market-places, beautiful avenues, wide streets and well laid out by-lanes. The city was very enthralling, well designed, and wonderfully decorated in various ways (Chanda line no. 2)

Who could count the multitudes of elephants, horses and mules, as well as the countless numbers of foot soldiers and chariots that dotted the city and roamed around it? (Chanda line no. 3)

One could see a lot many hordes of demon warriors of different forms and features, all of whom were immensely brave and strong in their own right. Verily indeed, it is not possible to describe the teeming demon army that was patrolling the place (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—As Hanuman stood atop the hill and looked around him, he observed a wonderful spectacle. There in the front he beheld the mesmerizing sight of the golden city of Lanka. Its outer perimeter was protected by the fort made of golden bricks; the city was well planned with streets and squares that were beautifully laid out and

decked up; and the army and the military police that was patrolling the city were formidable and awe-inspiring.]

बन बाग उपबन बाटिका सर कूप बापीं सोहहीं । ५ ।
 नर नाग सुर गंधर्व कन्या रूप मुनि मन मोहहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 कहूँ माल देह बिसाल सैल समान अतिबल गर्जहीं । ७ ।
 नाना अखारेन्ह भिरहिं बहु बिधि एक एकन्ह तर्जहीं ॥ ८ ॥

bana bāga upabana bāṭikā sara kūpa bāpīṁ sōhahīṁ. 5.
 nara nāga sura gandharba kan'yā rūpa muni mana mōhahīṁ. 6.
 kahum' māla dēha bisāla saila samāna atibala garjahīṁ. 7.
 nānā akhārēnha bhirahīṁ bahu bidhi ēka ēkanha tarjahīṁ. 8.

Forests, gardens, orchards and parks, as well as lakes, ponds and other water-bodies that abounded in the city looked very charming and attractive. (Chanda line no. 5)

There were also seen in the city countless daughters and ladies belonging to the human race (who lived on earth), the serpent race (who inhabited the subterranean world), and the Gods and the Gandharvas (who lived in heaven), who were so exceptionally beautiful and charming that they could even tempt the mind and heart of great sages, hermits and ascetics who are supposed to practice strict self-control over their senses and desire for pleasures of the world¹. (Chanda line no. 6)

At many places were seen roaring wrestlers who were exceptionally strong and had bodies as huge as mountains. (Chanda line no. 7)

Many such mighty wrestlers were challenging each other and engaged in fierce duels in many a courts and arenas earmarked for such sport. (Chanda line no. 8)

[Note—¹Ravana had overrun the world—the surface of the earth, the subterranean world, and the heaven; and as a trophy of his successful campaigns he had brought with him women belonging to the different races he had vanquished, such as the humans, the serpents, the gods and the gandharvas respectively. Out of these ladies he filled his own harems with the choicest and most beautiful ones who took his fancy, and he rewarded all his soldiers and commanders with the rest of these women.

The net effect was that the city of Lanka was full of male and female demons who were its original inhabitants, but at the same time it was also teeming with beautiful ladies of different age groups belonging to other non-demon races such as humans, serpents, gods and gandharvas. Most of these women were employed as harlots and concubines by the demons who were famed for their pervert, lustful and promiscuous nature, as they had no moral scruples worth the name.

Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 182.]

करि जतन भट कोटिन्ह बिकट तन नगर चहुँ दिसि रच्छहीं । ९ ।
 कहूँ महिष मानुष धेनु खर अज खल निसाचर भच्छहीं ॥ १० ॥

एहि लागि तुलसीदास इन्ह की कथा कछु एक है कही । ११ ।
रघुबीर सर तीरथ सरीरन्हि त्यागि गति पैहहिं सही ॥ १२ ॥

kari jatana bhaṭa kōṭinha bikaṭa tana nagara cahum̐ disi racchahīm. 9.
kahum̐ mahiṣa mānuṣa dhēnu khara aja khala nisācara bhacchahīm. 10
ēhi lāgi tulasīdāsa inha kī kathā kachu ēka hai kahī. 11.
raghubīra sara tīratha sarīranhi tyāgi gati paihahīm sahī. 12.

Ferocious and vicious demon warriors who had terrible bodies of all forms and sizes, and who numbered hundreds and thousands, were guarding the city from all the four sides¹. (Chanda line no. 9)

In some of the places could be seen cruel demons feasting on raw (uncooked) buffalos, humans, cows, mules and goats. (Chanda line no. 10)

The poet-saint Tulsidas (who penned this epic Ram Charit Manas) says that he has recorded in brief this scene of Lanka and its inhabitant demon hordes because they were lucky as they would soon discard their demonic bodies at the altar of arrows shot by Lord Ram which would surely grant them (i.e. their souls) deliverance from their sinful bodies just like the fate of those creatures who die in some holy pilgrim place². (Chanda line no. 11-12)

[Note—¹After Ravana had brought Sita as captive, he used to remain on his tenterhooks, feeling very uneasy and highly alarmed as he was always apprehensive of some kind of powerful invasion to free her. He knew about the strength of Lord Ram from what he had heard from his sister Supernakha about the way the Lord had not only decimated the demon army led by Khar, Dushan and Trishira which attacked him but had also killed these mighty demons themselves. It was not a child's play to achieve this feat single-handedly. He had also heard how the Lord had earlier protected the fire sacrifice of sage Vishwamitra by killing the demon Subahu along with his demon army, and throwing another demon Marich hundreds of miles away by shooting a headless arrow at him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.}

So therefore Ravana had deployed additional troops to secure the city, and these troopers were carefully selected for their strength, skill, power and vigour; for Ravana wished to be extra cautious and could not afford to take any chances.

This is the reason why at the time Hanuman was examining the city from the hill-top he saw it teeming with soldiers.

²This fact has also been endorsed in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7, 9-10 that precede Doha no. 114.]

दो०. पुर रखवारे देखि बहु कपि मन कीन्ह बिचार ।
अति लघु रूप धरौं निसि नगर करौं पइसार ॥ ३ ॥

dōhā.

pura rakhavārē dēkhi bahu kapi mana kīnha bicāra.
ati laghu rūpa dharaum̐ nisi nagara karaum̐ pa'isāra. 3.

When Kapi (Hanuman) observed that there were a large number of demons guarding the city, he decided that it would be wise and prudent to enter it by assuming a very small size for his body, and then sneaking in by taking advantage of the cover of darkness during the night. (Doha no. 3)

[Note—If Hanuman could expand his body to become huge as he did while facing Sursa, it was also possible for him to reduce it to a small size. To wit, Hanuman had that mystical ability to assume any size he wished.

Since the entrance points of Lanka were well guarded so he decided to sneak in with a very small frame, almost like that of a mosquito, so that no one would notice him. This is what he actually would do as we shall read below in the next verse.

Further, since it would be too risky to enter Lanka during daytime, so the best time would be the night when it would be completely dark. This implies that the day was of the new moon as there would be total darkness on that night.

Hanuman also thought that night would be safer because in all probability the guards would be fast asleep; during the day they had been feasting and drinking heavily or fighting duels, so by night-time they will get sufficiently drowsy and feel lethargic enough to fall prey to sleep.]

चौ०. मसक समान रूप कपि धरी । लंकहि चलेउ सुमिरि नरहरी ॥ १ ॥
नाम लंकिनी एक निसिचरी । सो कह चलेसि मोहि निंदरी ॥ २ ॥
जानेहि नहीं मरमु सठ मोरा । मोर अहार जहाँ लगि चोरा ॥ ३ ॥
मुठिका एक महा कपि हनी । रुधिर बमत धरनीं ढनमनी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

masaka samāna rūpa kapi dharī. laṅkahi calē'u sumiri naraharī. 1.
nāma laṅkinī ēka nisicarī. sō kaha calēsi mōhi nindarī. 2.
jānēhi nahīm maramu saṭha mōrā. mōra ahāra jahām̐ lagi cōrā. 3.
muṭhikā ēka mahā kapi hanī. rudhira bamata dharanīm̐ ḍhanamanī. 4.

Deciding that he must assume a very small size to avoid detection at the time of entering Lanka, Hanuman became as small as a house fly or a mosquito¹ and started on his way to Lanka (from his perch on the hill top where he had passed the day, waiting for nightfall) by first remembering (and praying) to Lord Ram, who was a human incarnation of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu; “*naraharī*”). (1)

There was a female demon by the name of Lankini. Unfortunately, as Hanuman attempted to sneak in surreptitiously, he was sighted by this vigilant demoness².

She intercepted him and called out aloud, ‘Oh you stranger; where are you going; how dare you insult me by attempting to go inside without seeking my permission? (2)

Oh you stupid fellow! Don’t you know my nature that I am habituated to feed on intruders who try to enter Lanka surreptitiously like a thief?’ (3)

Hearing this challenge and seeing this unexpected obstacle, Hanuman wasted no time to punch the demoness fiercely with his clenched fist that made her swoon and fall to the ground vomiting blood³. (4)

[Note—¹First of all it was darkness of the night, and secondly it is common for mosquitoes to roam wildly during the night—so Hanuman thought that this was the best plan to avoid detection, and to enter the city unnoticed.

This verse should not be interpreted to mean that Hanuman ‘actually’ became a fly or a mosquito in physical terms, but that he became only ‘as small as’ a fly or a mosquito in size. How did he manage to do it? Well, in ancient times some few living creatures had certain mystical abilities that empowered them to assume whatever form and size they wished; they could become huge and small, they could change their original forms to resemble some other creature, and even vanish from sight if they so wished only to suddenly reappear elsewhere. These abilities are called ‘Siddhis’; they are rare magical skills that enable the possessor to perform miracles beyond the abilities of ordinary creatures.

Since Hanuman was the ‘son of the wind-god’, so the latter aided his entry by blowing a breeze towards the city from the side of the ocean, and with this breeze Hanuman drifted towards the fort.

²She was so called because she was the captain of the sentries assigned the duty to protect the outer rim of the city from any intruder. She was selected because she was always very diligent in her duties; so while the other guards and soldiers slumbered and snored away, she kept strict eye on all entrance and exit points as she stayed wide awake and alert. Besides this diligence and steadfastness in doing her assigned duty, she had another excellent skill to her credit—which was sharp eyesight and the ability to see in the darkness of the night like nocturnal animals do. Because of these qualities she was assigned night duty, and was at her sentinel post when Hanuman tried to sneak in.

³Hanuman acted very swiftly to silence her as any hesitation would have been catastrophic, because if this demoness started yelling then all those demon soldiers who were fast asleep all around the entrance would have woken up, and that would have meant an instant clash even before he had a chance to put his foot in the city. He was not afraid of any clashes, but this encounter at the gate would have caused a general state of emergency and turmoil in the city, and the risk was that Ravana, who was very intelligent, would have guessed that someone has come searching for Sita, and this meant that she could be put to some form of grave and unknown danger. This risk could not be afforded at any cost; so Hanuman decided to silence the demoness immediately.

Earlier we have read how he had killed the demoness of the ocean, the one named Singhika, by a single blow (refer: Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 3 herein above). He has proved his prowess and mettle once again by felling Lankini by a single hard blow here too; Lankini was not given a chance to utter another word. This precaution worked marvelously because all other sentries continued to sleep soundly, and Hanuman could enter Lanka unnoticed by anyone more.]

पुन संभारि उठी सो लंका । जोरि पानि कर बिनय ससंका ॥ ५ ॥

जब रावनहि ब्रह्म बर दीन्हा । चलत बिरंचि कहा मोहि चीन्हा ॥ ६ ॥
 बिकल होसि तैं कपि कें मारे । तब जानेसु निसिचर संघारे ॥ ७ ॥
 तात मोर अति पुन्य बहूता । देखेउँ नयन राम कर दूता ॥ ८ ॥

puni sambhāri uṭhī sō laṅkā. jōri pāni kara binaya sasaṅkā. 5.
 jaba rāvanahi brahma bara dīnhā. calata biran̄ci kahā mōhi cīnhā. 6.
 bikala hōsi taim̄ kapi kēm̄ mārē. taba jānēsu nīsicara saṅghārē. 7.
 tāta mōra ati pun'ya bahūtā. dēkhē'um̄ nayana rāma kara dūtā. 8.

Then that guardian of Lanka recovered herself and got up, but she was very terrified. She clasped her hands in supplication and prayed for mercy. (5)

She (Lankini) said, 'At the time Brahma, the creator, gave boons to Ravana¹, and was on his way back, his sight fell on me, and recognizing me he gave me the following sign or clue that prophesized the doom of the demon race. (6)

He said to me, "When one day you become extremely agitated and are seriously wounded by being hit or punched by a Kapi (a monkey-like being), then at that time you must become aware that all was over for the demon race and their time was up (i.e. their extermination was near)². (7)

Since that event has happened just now, I realize that the time has arrived indeed. My dear (tāta), forsooth I say that I am very fortunate to be able to see with my own eyes a messenger of Lord Ram. [So you be blessed.] (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-5 that precede Doha no. 177.

²A very important observation can be made here—and it is this: Everything in the Creator's creation is destined to come to an end. Even the boons granted by the Creator Brahma himself could not ensure eternity for Ravana and his demon race, for the Creator himself predicted the end.]

दो०। तात स्वर्ग अपबर्ग सुख धरिअ तुला एक अंग ।
 तूल न ताहि सकल मिलि जो सुख लव सतसंग ॥ ४ ॥
 dōhā.

tāta svarga apabarga sukha dhari'a tulā ēka aṅga.
 tūla na tāhi sakala mili jō sukha lava satasaṅga. 4.

My dear (tāta)! If one were to put all the pleasures and happiness of Swarga (heaven) as well as of Moksha (deliverance from this world of miseries and transmigration) on one side of a scale, and weigh it against the happiness and joy derived by even a little time spent in Satsang—verily indeed and without gainsay it can be affirmatively said that all the best types of pleasures and happiness of the former kind simply cannot

match even a fraction of the joy and happiness pertaining to the latter category¹. (Doha no. 4)

[Note—¹In this verse the importance of ‘Satsang’ is being stressed. It is said here that there is absolutely no comparison between the intensity and depth of spiritual bliss, beatitude, peace, happiness, fulfillment and contentedness that are attained by the virtue of Satsang done even for a little time on the one hand, and all the pleasures, comforts and joys that are obtained by going to heaven or getting freedom from worldly problems that torment the creature endlessly on the other hand—because the former is multiple times superior to and supersedes the latter many times over.

The term “Satsang” means having communion with saintly and pious souls; meeting holy people who are devoted to Lord God; talking with them who have offered themselves in the service of the Lord.

Here, meeting of Lankini with Hanuman is likened to a ‘Satsang’ because he is on a mission of Lord Ram, he is devoted to the Lord and committed to his work, he has offered himself and sacrificed his personal safety completely in order to accomplish the mission of the Lord, which is to eliminate the cruel demon and restore peace in the world. Hanuman has no personal agenda to accomplish; all he wishes is to serve his dear Lord Ram to the best of his ability, and in this effort he would not tolerate any obstacle or make any compromise. An aura of holiness and divinity effuses from his being and spreads out on all directions, bestowing spiritual peace, bliss and happiness on all those who come in contact with him, just like the rays of light from the sun or the moon radiate in all directions to spread cheer in this world.

Just imagine what would have happened if the world had not been blessed with the light emanating from the sun and the moon; would artificial light of the best kind that man has ever produced from any source, say from electricity or atomic energy, have ever given life, energy and vitality to this world like the rays of the sun and the moon do? Likewise, the joy and bliss of Satsang simply have no parallel; all the joys and pleasures of heaven as well as the freedom from miseries of life in this mortal gross world taken together simply cannot match the elation and bliss that a single source in the form of nectar of Satsang provides to a creature.]

चौ०. प्रबिसि नगर कीजे सब काजा । हृदयँ राखि कोसलपुर राजा ॥ १ ॥

caupāī.

prabisi nagara kījē saba kājā. ḥṛdayam̐ rākhi kōsalapura rājā. 1.

[Lankini blessed Hanuman and gave him permission to enter the city of Lanka.] She said, ‘Enter the city, and keeping the Lord of Kaushal (Lord Ram) in your heart (i.e. by steadily remembering the Lord and invoking his blessings in your heart), do all the work (which have been assigned to you by the Lord). [I gladly allow you to enter the city. Invoke Lord Ram’s grace and remember him at all times as you go about accomplishing your task. I bless you of success on my part; have no worries from me.] ’ (1)

[Note—In the previous verses she has disclosed the secret known only to her; it was a prophesy by the Creator himself—that one day a Kapi would hit her hard, then at that time she must realize that time of the end of the demon race had arrived. {Refer: Ram

Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 4 herein above.}

This is a mortal world; whatever and whosoever that has taken birth in this world is as mortal as the world itself. Even the gods of heaven, who seemingly have endless life, actually have a limited life-span; their life seems ‘endless’ simply because we measure it with the scale with which we measure life in this mortal human world, which is extremely small in length. It is just like comparing distances between galaxies and celestial bodies using scales of measurement that we use to measure distances on the surface of the earth, viz. inches, feet and miles, instead of a scale fit for cosmic measurements, such as in light-years. Come to think of it—even Brahma the creator has a limited life-span, and one fine ‘cosmic day’ he would too cease to exist like the other two gods of the Trinity.

To wit, what Brahma told Lankini was a mere reiteration of the universal and well-known Law of Creation—that all that has come into being would also come to an end! This being the incontrovertible, irrefutable and irrevocable Truth pertaining to this creation, the demons, no matter what boon their king had extracted from the Creator, were bound to die; it was only that Brahma gave a sign to Lankini when that would actually happen, and there was nothing more to it nor any new thing that was predicted by the Creator.

Now since the doom of the demon race was near at hand, and it was beyond the powers of Lankini to stop it, she was clever to take the credit of helping the messenger deputed by the Supreme Being to implement the Law of Creation as stated above. It would also enable her to be in the good books of the Supreme Judge on the ‘Day of Reckoning’—for surely she would merit some concession for not harassing and causing unnecessary hurdles in the path of the Supreme Lord’s messenger, in this case Hanuman, in carrying out his orders successfully.

Another important point to note here is that Lankini advises Hanuman to remember Lord Ram constantly throughout his stay in Lanka, as this would be his sure-shot formula for success. She reminds him that he must always remember that whatever wondrous feats he shall accomplish during this campaign are made possible only by the virtue of authority and power of the supreme Lord Ram himself, as they would not be at all possible otherwise, so he must never think that he had done anything great or noteworthy on his own accord.

A similar idea was expressed by Jamvant when the victorious team went to Lord Ram to report to him about the success of the mission—that whatever was achieved and all success that was obtained were due to the grace of the Lord, and no individual, including Hanuman, should take credit for anything. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 30.]

गरल सुधा रिपु करहिं मिताई । गोपद सिंधु अनल सितलाई ॥ २ ॥

गरुड़ सुमेरु रेनु सम ताही । राम कृपा करि चितवा जाही ॥ ३ ॥

garala sudhā ripu karahim mitā'ī. gōpada sindhu anala sitalā'ī. 2.

garuṛa sumēru rēnu sama tāhī. rāma kṛpā kari citavā jāhī. 3.

[The saintly crow Kaagbhusund, who was narrating this glorious story of Lord Ram’s life and deeds that have been chronicled in Ram Charit Manas, to Garud, the vehicle of Lord Vishnu, who had come to the former to hear the story being narrated, said—]

‘Oh Garud! He upon whom Lord Ram casts his sight of mercy, grace and benevolence, then for this fortunate soul even poison turns into nectar, his enemy becomes his friend, the vast ocean transforms into a shallow body of water no larger than the hollow made on earth by a cow’s hoof, the fire becomes cool [2], and the mighty Mt. Sumeru becomes as small and light as a particle of dust or sand [3].’ (2-3)

[Note—Kaagbhusund has narrated to Garud the epic story of the Ramayana in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125. This wonderful narration has already been published separately in English by the author of this present Book; it is available on-line on the same platforms as this current Book.

In these two verses, the glory of Lord Ram is being emphasized. In simple words they imply that if the Lord so wishes, then what seems to be impossible can easily become possible; five examples are given in this context.]

अति लघु रूप धरेउ हनुमाना । पैठा नगर सुमिरि भगवाना ॥ ४ ॥

मंदिर मंदिर प्रति करि सोधा । देखे जहँ तहँ अगनित जोधा ॥ ५ ॥

ati laghu rūpa dharē'u hanumānā. paiṭhā nagara sumiri bhagavānā. 4.
mandira mandira prati kari sōdhā. dēkhē jaham'taham'aganita jōdhā. 5.

Hanuman resumed his small form¹, and remembering the Lord (Sri Ram)², he entered the city of Lanka³. (4)

He went from one residence to another, looking carefully at each dwelling (to see if he could find any hint of Sita in any of these dwelling places). Everywhere he looked he could only see countless demon warriors. (5)

[Note—¹We have read in Chaupai line no. 1 that preceded Doha no. 4 herein above that when Hanuman started for Lanka from his perch on top of the hill that overlooked the city, he had assumed a miniature form. Once again it is said in this verse that he had taken a miniature form while entering the city. This is because for some time Hanuman had to revert back to his normal form, which was the same as the one he has had while crossing the ocean, i.e. it was huge. {Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

This occasion was when Lankini—who was of a huge size by the virtue of her being a female demon, and also because she was a sentry appointed to guard the gates of Lanka, which means that she must have had a muscular and almost masculine body like that of a demon warrior—had intercepted him. Hanuman had punched her so hard that she vomited blood, swooned and fell down on the ground. Now, to hit a demoness of such a huge proportion so effectively that she would be vanquished by a single blow, Hanuman had to assume a form at least of a size that equaled hers, if not bigger.

Once the job was done he had to resume his small form in order to stealthily enter Lanka and remain undetected while moving inside the city, because if he retained a distinctive form then the instant he set foot within the city an alarm would be raised. He was not here to fight, for his mission was only limited to finding the

whereabouts of Sita; so he wished not to make himself conspicuous. {Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 30.}

The fascinating and wondrous story of Hanuman's adventures in Lanka, the city of the giant Demon race, where he entered and roamed around for some time in a miniature form as small as a house fly or a mosquito, reminds one of Jonathan Swift's classical tale describing the "Travels of Gulliver", especially Gulliver's second voyage to the 'Land of Brobdingnag' where he was called 'Grildrig', which the English people call 'Mannikin'; or for that matter, if we have no hesitation in taking some liberty with imagination, then, with roles reversed, it is like the 'Adventure of a Lilliput in the Land of Gullivers', for Hanuman was no larger than a gnat or a cockroach or a mice running amok in city inhabited by Giants!

Indeed, Hanuman was like a Lilliputian in this adventurous journey to the Land of the Mammoths. And if we were to cite a metaphor from the Holy Bible, the closest that comes to our mind is the Story of Goliath, the giant, and David, from the Old Testament (1 Samuel, 17).]

²We will note that Hanuman had invoked Lord Ram at every crucial point of his journey. First he had done so when he started on the mission from the shore of the ocean—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 1.

Then he had invoked Lord Ram once again at the time he left his perch on the hill and started for the fort of Lanka in a miniature form—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4.

And he does it again here at the time of actually setting foot within the city of Lanka itself. This invocation and remembrance of Lord Ram ensured that the benevolent, merciful, gracious and all-powerful Lord would keep a strict watch on Hanuman with a vigilant eye to make sure that he is safe and secure, as well as successful in his mission; it was an insurance against any misfortune or evil eye that might show the impertinence to interfere in Hanuman's projects.

By his own example Hanuman shows us the way how we can go about our daily lives, attending to its chores and doing our expected duties diligently with a focused mind, at the same time as worshipping our beloved God. Since, from the practical point of view, the mind can't be expected to be completely focused on two different things simultaneously with the same level of concentration, because that would be distractive for it—i.e. it is not really possible in practice to focus the mind on God and do the work of this mundane world simultaneously with the same sincerity and diligence, then what we ought to do is to let the mind be attentive to the job at hand, do it meticulously with full focus and industry, but every now and then take a deep breath from the hectic schedule to pause for a moment to remember our beloved Lord God and thank him for everything, and once again resume our work.

This is a very effective and practical method both to relax as well as to gain peace and confidence, because we keep reminding ourselves that there is a powerful hand supporting and protecting us from behind, and there is nothing to fear. Even failure would not disturb us to an extreme despair as we know that, first, we had done our best and there was nothing more we could do, second, that no one should expect that every desire or wish of his must be fulfilled because this is not the way the world works, and third, that this development which we classify as 'failure' is actually an indication that our great 'protector and saviour' does not want the thing the way we want it to be.

True devotion and submission to the Lord God surely and without gainsay is to treat one's self as one who serves his Lord and carries out his orders and assignments to the best of one's abilities; and just like a servitor who is dispassionate towards the results of his efforts, as his only concern is to do what is assigned to him with utmost sincerity, honesty and diligence, the true devotee of the Lord God too does not get perturbed or worked up about the results of his efforts. For him, success and failure are the same.

In fact however, a true devotee is one who feels that even if he succeeds in any worldly endeavour, but forgets to remember his Lord God during the course of the proceedings that gave him such success, then that success is no better than total failure.

³We note here that Lankini had kept quiet about Hanuman's arrival and entry into the city. Besides her conviction that the end of the demons was near as it was Brahma's prophesy that cannot be negated, there was one other important reason why she kept quiet about an enemy's spy entering the city. She feared severe punishment, even death and torture, for negligence and letting Hanuman in; she was appointed to guard the gates of the fort after due diligence about her abilities and with the full confidence that she had the ability to defend it from any intruder whosoever he might be. She had herself asserted this when she first challenged Hanuman, saying that she feeds on thieves and intruders. So she decided to exercise discretion and keep quiet. {Refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4.}

गयउ दसानन मंदिर माहीं । अति बिचित्र कहि जात सो नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 सयन किएँ देखा कपि तेही । मंदिर महुँ न दीखि बैदेही ॥ ७ ॥
 भवन एक पुनि दीख सुहावा । हरि मंदिर तहुँ भिन्न बनावा ॥ ८ ॥

gaya'u dasānana mandira māhīm. ati bicitra kahi jāta sō nāhīm. 6.
 sayana ki'ēm' dēkhā kapi tēhī. mandira mahum' na dīkhi baidēhī. 7.
 bhavana ēka puni dīkha suhāvā. hari mandira taham' bhinna banāvā. 8.

In due course of time, during the process of examining all the dwellings of Lanka in search of any tangible hint of Sita, Hanuman reached the palace of Ravana. It was so extraordinarily magnificent and grand to behold that it is not possible to describe it in words. (6)

The Kapi (Hanuman) observed that he (Ravana) was asleep inside the palace, but nowhere could he perceive any sign of Vaidehi¹ (Sita). (7)

So he moved ahead, and soon descried a residence which was pleasant to look at, for it was like a virtual temple of Lord Hari (Lord Vishnu), and thus different from the rest of the buildings of the city². (8)

[Note—¹The word used here is “baidēhī”—which literally means ‘one without a physical body’. This is an apt epithet used for Sita because what Ravana had brought to Lanka was a mere shadow or an apparition of the real Sita, and not her true and real

self. Thus, the ‘Sita’ that was held in Lanka was only an image of her; it was a false Sita; it was an illusion that created an impression that she was there but like an apparition it was merely a ghostly shadow.

As we have already read earlier, Lord Ram had planned everything meticulously in advance so that he can accomplish the mission of eliminating the cruel, sinful and vicious demons without any hitch, and towards this end it was absolutely necessary to induce them to commit some grave impertinence and sinful act of misdemeanour so that a justified excuse could be found to get rid of them. Since for this enterprise to succeed the Lord had to take help of Sita, and she was also willing to cooperate, but at the same time the Lord was very concerned that no evil spot could ever be cast on Sita’s immaculate character, purity and chastity, so it became imperative for him to work out some way that both the ends could be met.

Thus, the Supreme Lord—who is a master of delusions, a maverick actor, and the best magician of this creation who excels in conjuring up fantastic illusions that even surpass the real thing—decided to hide the ‘real Sita’ by placing her in the safe custody of the Fire God, the only God whose integrity and powers cannot be questioned as his very name suggests that he represents the powerful ‘fire element’ of Nature that spares none and burns all that is not pure. So, what remained after this exercise was a reflection, an image, a shadow or an apparition, whatever we may like to call it, of Sita. This plan was carried out so secretly that even Laxman, Lord Ram’s own brother and comrade-in-arm in the forest and throughout the epic War, was not aware of it; even he thought that Ravana had abducted the real Sita! This is explicitly and emphatically stated in all versions of the Ramayana. In the context of our present reading, refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.

Come to think of this miracle and view it from a broader perspective: When the whole of Lanka was burnt by Hanuman, about which we shall soon be reading in great detail in our Book, Sita remained unscathed. All other demons and demonesses ran helter-skelter to escape the leaping flames, but Sita remained confined to the same place under the tree where she had been sitting since her arrival at Lanka. It should be very clear and evident to an intelligent observer who looks closely and applies his mind to conclude that in this fiery scenario when flames were leaping everywhere, Sita could sit and survive because she had ‘no physical body’! Fire can burn only those things that have a physical existence; it does not destroy an apparition or a ghost or an imaginary shadow for they do not actually exist.

The final proof came when the war ended. Lord Ram created a scene of having doubts about the integrity of Sita, and required her to prove her self by ‘entering a raging fire’. This was merely a ruse to create a dazzling blaze that would blind everyone standing around so that the original Sita could come out from the place where she was hidden by the Lord himself, i.e. from the custody of the Fire God. This incident is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 14 that precedes Doha no. 108—to Chanda line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 109.

Of course we shall read all about this incident in due course of time when we reach that point in Chapter no. 19 of our Book.

A very pertinent question may arise in the mind of the reader here, and it is this: How was Hanuman sure that none of the ladies he saw in the many dwellings he investigated was Sita? That means he knew how to recognize her when he saw her, is it not so? Yes indeed, it is so. How come? The answer is this: At the time Ravana had been passing over the Mt. Rishyamook in his chariot with Sita, she had seen a group of monkeys sitting down below on the summit of this mountain, and she had then

wailed loudly, called out Lord Ram's name, and had dropped down some of her ornament and pieces of clothes torn from her garments so that these monkeys could keep them to show Lord Ram when he passes that way searching for her. When the Lord came that way and chatted with Sugriv, the latter told him all about this incident. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 5.}

Hanuman had personally seen Sita on that occasion, and surely and certainly therefore he would easily recognize her when he saw her again.]

²All the buildings and residential places of Lanka bore universal marks and had characteristic features that identified them with their masters and lords, i.e. the demons who occupied them. But there was one dwelling that was different from the rest; it stood out for signs that indicated that some god-loving person occupies it. We shall soon read in the Doha no. 5 that follows herein below what signs distinguished it from the rest of the structures in Lanka.

The general atmosphere of this particular dwelling was similar to a temple dedicated to Lord Hari; it had a holy aura around it that was soothing for the senses and pleased the eyes of the beholder.

To wit, this residence was like an oasis in the vast desert known as Lanka; since it was different from the other buildings, so it caught the eye of Hanuman.]

दो०. रामायुध अंकित गृह सोभा बरनि न जाइ ।

नव तुलसिका बृंद तहँ देखि हरष कपिराइ ॥ ५ ॥

dōhā.

rāmāyudha aṅkita gṛha sōbhā barani na jā'i.

nava tulasikā br̥nda taham̃ dēkhi haraṣa kapirā'i. 5.

That dwelling was singular inasmuch as it had signs of Lord Ram's arms (weapons) marked on it (i.e. on its main entrance gate or doorway). [To wit, the 'bow and arrow', which are the weapons held by Lord Ram in his hands, were marked on this building.]¹

This building was so pleasant and beautiful to look at that its magnificence cannot be described. [Forsooth, the dwelling place looked all the more comforting and pleasing by the sign of the 'bow and arrow' marked on it, as this sign directly invoked the protective shield of Lord Ram, and also indicated that Lord Ram was always present there in a subtle and invisible way that cannot be perceived by the eye.]

Besides this sign, Hanuman, the Lord of the Kapis, also perceived clusters of the sacred Tulsi trees (the Basil plant) that were fresh and green planted in the courtyard; this sight excited him and filled him with a thrill. [To wit, the sign of the 'bow and arrow' as well as the 'presence of the sacred Tulsi tree' clearly meant that the inhabitant of this house was a devotee of Lord Ram. Hanuman was elated as at last he has discovered a true friend in an enemy's land who would surely be of a great help to him.]² (Doha no. 5)

[Note—¹It was a wonder of wonder to find someone openly putting up signs of Lord Ram, i.e. the bow and the arrow, on his home in a city of demons. It was well known that Ravana treated Lord Ram as his arch enemy as he knew that the Lord was the one

who would exterminate the entire demon race. No king would ever like that someone in his kingdom would so blatantly exhibit any symbol of his enemy, which is no small offense, and it amounts to treason, sedition, disloyalty, betrayal and sacrilege, whatever one would like to call it.

How and why did Ravana allow this to happen right under his nose? It's a singular and remarkable pointer to Ravana's noble soul! Though he had a body of a demon, though he had been committing serious crimes and was accused of cruelty and viciousness, yet deep down in his heart he yearned for deliverance, emancipation and salvation of his soul. Being born a 'demon' he was constrained to behave like a 'demon', but internally he wanted spiritual peace and beatitude.

This particular house belonged to Ravana's brother Vibhishan. Vibhishan was a devout person who was pious and a devotee of Lord Vishnu who had manifested in the form of Lord Ram. In the very beginning when the three demon brothers, Ravana, Kumbhakarna and Vibhishan, had done severe Tapa (penance) to please Brahma, the creator, and the latter rewarded them with their desired boons, Vibhishan had sought devotion and love for Lord Hari. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 177.}

Ravana was well aware of it; he knew that since Vibhishan had got this boon directly from Brahma who had also granted boons to Ravana himself, so it was beyond his powers to cancel it, especially when Vibhishan was his own brother. If he tried to play fools with Brahma's grants to Vibhishan just because he did not like them, then there were good chances, Ravana feared, that Brahma would become so annoyed with him that he would do something that will neutralize Ravana's own boons.

Besides this, Ravana's tolerance of Vibhishan's open display of devotion for Lord Vishnu also indicates how obliging and accommodating he was as far at least as the members of his own race were concerned. Not only Vibhishan, Ravana had others in his kingdom whom he knew to be god-fearing and devoted to Lord Vishnu; one such was an old demoness by the name of Trijata. Ravana had specially appointed her to take care of Sita so that other cruel demoness do not torment her because he was aware of this fact—that Trijata would respect Sita as she was a pious and god-fearing creature. This fact that Trijata was a devotee of Lord Ram whom she knew to be an incarnation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, is explicitly stated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11; we shall encounter Trijata very soon.

His own wife Mandodari had given clear indications of her respect and reverence for Lord Ram when she had made repeated entreaties with Ravana to give Sita back to the Lord, and stop his confrontational attitude towards Lord Ram. {Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Doha no. 7; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. Doha no. 15; and (iii) once again in Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 37.}

Imagine Ravana tolerating his own wife siding with his enemy and singing the latter's praises on his face; would any husband tolerate this behaviour of his wife? But Ravana did. It is ample proof of his tolerant nature on the one hand, and his internal belief that finally the time of his deliverance has arrived, and that he is so lucky that the Supreme Being himself has come to deliver him by his own hands!

We have another instance of how Ravana had looked the other way when a member of his family praised Lord Ram. His own younger brother Kumbhakaran had sternly reproached him when Ravana disclosed that he had made Lord Ram his enemy. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes

Doha no. 62—to Doha no. 63.} We also would be reading this incident in Chapter no. 15 of our Book.

In short, Ravana willingly allowed this small oasis of holiness, piety and devotion for Lord God in the form of the dwelling we refer to in this Doha to thrive in his city of Lanka because he derived some subtle form of spiritual peace, solace and comfort by it. Verily indeed, this particular house was like a patch of greenery in the dry desert represented by Lanka.

There is another reason also why the inhabitant of this house had put up the sign of the 'bow and the arrow' in front of the dwelling. He lived in a perpetual danger of being attacked, if not by Ravana himself then by other demons who hated him. So he had wisely marked the sign of the 'bow and arrow', which are weapons by which one would defend oneself, on his gate and doorway as a sort of magical charm to ward off evil eyes and protect him from some evil spirit that may aim to harm him.

²The 'Tulsi tree' is planted in houses of devotees of Lord Vishnu as this plant is very dear to the Lord. So when Hanuman saw these two signs—one of the bow and arrow, and the other of the Tulsi plant—in that house, he was convinced that its resident was surely a devotee of Lord Ram as well as Lord Vishnu, because the bow and arrow reminds one of Lord Ram, and Tulsi plant of Lord Vishnu.

He felt thrilled because at last he has found a friend in an alien land. If nothing else, then at least he can take some rest and refresh himself in that house if he introduces himself as a messenger of Lord Ram. He felt sure that the inhabitant would welcome him as soon as he knows who Hanuman was, and there was little to fear.

Still Hanuman was skeptical because it was so odd to see such an auspicious home in the middle of the city of demons. The next verse says exactly this.]

चौ०. लंका निसिचर निकर निवासा । इहाँ कहाँ सज्जन कर बासा ॥ १ ॥
मन महुँ तरक करैं कपि लागा । तेहीं समय बिभीषनु जागा ॥ २ ॥
राम राम तेहिं सुमिरन कीन्हा । हृदयँ हरष कपि सज्जन चीन्हा ॥ ३ ॥
एहि सन हठि करिहउँ पहिचानी । साधु ते होइ न कारज हानी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

laṅkā nisicara nikara nivāsā. ihām̐ kahām̐ sajjana kara bāsā. 1.
mana mahum̐ taraka karaim̐ kapi lāgā. tēhīm̐ samaya bibhīṣanu jāgā. 2.
rāma rāma tēhīm̐ sumirana kīnhā. hṛdayam̐ haraṣa kapi sajjana cīnhā. 3.
ēhi sana haṭhi kariha'um̐ pahicānī. sādhu tē hō'i na kāraja hānī. 4.

When Hanuman saw the dwelling marked by the holy signs as alluded to in the previous verses, he wondered, 'Lanka is teeming with (cruel, evil, sinful and vicious) demons; where is the chance of finding a god-loving person, who is pious and of a pure heart, living in such a vile place as this?' (1)

Just at the time the Kapi (Hanuman) was thus contemplating in his Mana (mind and heart), Vibhishan woke up (as night was coming to a close, and day-break was near)¹. (2)

As soon as he woke up, he invoked the holy name of Ram and repeated it aloud twice, saying “Ram, Ram”. When the Kapi heard these words pronounced he felt exhilarated in his heart, because he concluded that the speaker was indeed a pious and saintly soul². (3)

So Hanuman thought to himself, ‘I shall surely make an acquaintance with this gentleman, for I am absolutely sure that he, being a saintly person, can not cause any hindrance in my work. [Rather, I am quite certain that he would be of some help to me.]’ (4)

[Note—¹This verse clearly implies that Hanuman had spent the whole night searching for Sita, and investigating each and every home in the city. He had entered the fort at nightfall, and now it was nearing dawn.

It is to be observed here that he moved around so silently, so stealthily and so inconspicuously that no one got a wind that he was on the prowl. The city and its inhabitants were slumbering peacefully, not aware that a huge catastrophe was looming large over their heads. To wit, all the precautions taken by Ravana failed to prevent the implementation of what Providence had destined for the demon race, for the doom of the demon race had dawned that morning when Hanuman saw the first ray of sunlight over that city.

²The very utterance of Lord Ram’s holy name immediately established Vibhishan’s credentials to Hanuman. Only a saintly, pious and god-loving soul would invoke the holy name of the Lord God the very first thing in the morning. There is a lesson to be learnt here: we are recognized by the words we speak. If we are of a noble heart and have a pious soul, if we are devoted to God and conscious that he is our ultimate Father, if our upbringing is good and we have had good moral education—then remembering the Lord God, our supreme Benefactor, Protector, Saviour and Father, would be a part of our nature and our true character.

Vibhishan was accustomed and habituated to invoke the holy name of Lord Ram to start his day with; it was his natural habit and routine. He was not aware at this point of time that Hanuman was in Lanka, so he had not uttered the holy words ‘Ram, Ram’ to attract Hanuman’s attention or to impress him in any way.

Another important point to note is that Vibhishan had uttered these holy words, ‘Ram, Ram’, quite loudly because they were heard by Hanuman who was somewhere at a distance outside his home. It was still dark as dawn was a few hours away; there was stillness and quietude in the city. The holy name of Lord Ram echoed all around Vibhishan’s home; it was like the call that holy men would make to the laity to wake up to welcome a new day by first offering their obeisance to the Lord God, and pray to the Lord to seek his blessings for a good start of the day.]

बिप्र रूप धरि बचन सुनाए । सुनत बिभीषन उठि तहँ आए ॥ ५ ॥
 करि प्रनाम पूँछी कुसलाई । बिप्र कहहु निज कथा बुझाई ॥ ६ ॥
 की तुम्ह हरि दासन्ह महुँ कोई । मोरें हृदय प्रीति अति होई ॥ ७ ॥
 की तुम्ह रामु दीन अनुरागी । आयहु मोहि करन बड़भागी ॥ ८ ॥

bipra rūpa dhari bacana sunā'ē. sunata bibhīṣana uṭhi taham'ā'ē. 5.
 kari pranāma pūm'chī kusalā'ī. bipra kahahu nija kathā bujhā'ī. 6.
 kī tumha hari dāsanha maham'kō'ī. mōrēm hr̥daya prīti ati hō'ī. 7.
 kī tumha rāmu dīna anurāgī. āyahu mōhi karana baṛabhāgī. 8.

Hanuman approached Vibhishan's home by assuming the form of a Brahmin (bipra rūpa dhari), and called out to him. [To wit, Hanuman pronounced some words by which Vibhishan would immediately recognize that some acquaintance is standing at the door.]¹

As soon as Vibhishan heard these words, he got up and came (rushing) to the door from where he heard the call. (5)

Vibhishan bowed his head reverentially before the visitor and politely asked for his well-being, requesting the latter to introduce himself by telling more about his own self.

Hence, Vibhishan enquired, 'Oh Brahmin (bipra)! Please enlighten me more about yourself. [Please be kind to tell me who you are, and what the purpose of your visit is.] (6)

Are you one of the devotees of Lord Hari (for you have pronounced the Lord's name 'Ram, Ram' as a calling sign), for as soon as I have seen you a sort of natural affection has sprouted in my heart for you?² (7)

Or is it that you are the merciful and benevolent Lord Ram himself who has come in disguise to bless me and make me fulfilled?³ (8)

[Note—¹Hanuman was very wise, intelligent and prudent. Just a moment earlier he had heard Vibhishan invoking Lord Ram's name aloud; it was this name which had, in fact, made Hanuman decide that he must go and meet this person as he is surely to be a pious and god-loving soul who is devoted to Lord Ram, knowing fully well that the Lord is not an ordinary human being but a manifested form of the Supreme Being, for otherwise he wouldn't have pronounced the Lord's holy name "Ram" because it was the name of an enemy of the demon race.

So it is very certain that the best way Hanuman thought he should introduce himself to Vibhishan was by calling out the same name 'Ram' as the latter had done a while ago, because then Vibhishan would have no doubt that the person who is standing at the door calling out to him is a friend and not a foe.

Hanuman wished to play it safe and ensure that Vibhishan is taken into confidence at once when he decided to approach the latter's home in the form of a Brahmin, for it was too risky to cause any doubt or alarm in Vibhishan's mind regarding the identity of the early morning caller, as he could raise an alarm, at which demon guards would come rushing in to arrest the intruder, even before Hanuman would have had time to investigate the city further more closely and clearly during the daylight hours. The sight of a humble Brahmin standing at the door would be highly reassuring for Vibhishan and welcomed by him in a city where only ferocious demons of the most ugly shapes and hideous forms were to be seen everywhere.

We should also note that Hanuman had assumed the form of a Brahmin when he had gone to meet Lord Ram and Laxman at the foot of Mt. Rishyamook, because, as we have seen above, it is the safest form that pre-empts any chance of fear and

apprehension. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 1.}

²Vibhishan told Hanuman, “Oh Brahmin, it appears to me that there exists a natural bond of affection between our souls, and they appear to resonate with the same frequency. As soon as I saw you it appears to me that I have met someone who is friendly, someone who is on the same plane of spiritual being as my own self. Obviously it is only possible between two brothers who have deep fraternal love for each other. It looks that we have a common father; which means that you too are a devotee of Lord Ram as I am, because the Lord is the Supreme Father to all his devotees. What is it; please tell me as curiosity has risen in my heart.”

Vibhishan loves Lord Ram very dearly; he is devoted to the Lord and worships him even while living in the midst of vicious and sinful demons who are vehemently opposed to the Lord. Anyone who has Lord Ram living in his heart will also love a devotee of the Lord with the same natural bond of affection and fraternal love that exists between brothers who are related to each other through blood, as they have a common father. The reverse is also true—i.e. if one loves a devotee of Lord Ram then the Lord would reside in his heart. This is clearly affirmed by the learned sage Valmiki in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 131.

To wit, a bond of mutual affection and brotherhood sprouted instantly and spontaneously between Hanuman and Vibhishan.

³A remarkable observation indeed! It implies that there is not much of a difference between Lord Ram himself and his true devotee; the devotee is deemed to be an image of the Lord in holiness, piety, bliss and purity of soul; the devotee is a veritable reflection of the glorious virtues that Lord Ram possesses.]

दो०. तब हनुमंत कही सब राम कथा निज नाम ।

सुनत जुगल तन पुलक मन मगन सुमिरि गुन ग्राम ॥ ६ ॥

dōhā.

taba hanumanta kahī saba rāma kathā nija nāma.

sunata jugala tana pulaka mana magana sumiri guna grāma. 6.

When Vibhishan asked Hanuman to tell him more about himself by way of an introduction, the latter disclosed his name and briefly narrated the story related to Lord Ram. [Hanuman told Vibhishan how Sita was abducted by Ravana, and how he has been sent by Lord Ram to meet her and find about her whereabouts, so that the Lord can come and free her.]

This narration of the Lord’s story thrilled both the narrator and the listener; both of them became deeply emotional and got lost in a reverie of devotion and affection for the Lord when they remembered him and his glorious virtues¹. (Doha no. 6)

[Note—¹This is special quality of a true devotee of Lord Ram as shown here by Hanuman and Vibhishan, that is “he is thrilled when he hears the holy name of the Lord being pronounced, when he hears the divine story of the Lord being narrated”.

A similar condition prevailed upon the saintly crow Kaagbhusund when he narrated the holy story of Lord Ram to Garud; there are ample instances of it in Ram Charit Manas. Some of them are the following: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 64; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 68; (iii) Doha no. 69; (iv) Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 124.

We also read in this context that the ‘listener’ of this story narrated by the crow-saint Kaagbhusund, i.e. Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu who had come to him specifically with this purpose in mind, too became highly thrilled so much so that his body became puffed, his feathers and stood on their end, and his wings spread wide in emotional excitement. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 93.]

चौ०. सुनहु पवनसुत रहनि हमारी । जिमि दसनन्हि महुँ जीभ बिचारी ॥ १ ॥
तात कबहुँ मोहि जानि अनाथा । करिहहिं कृपा भानुकुल नाथा ॥ २ ॥
तामस तनु कछु साधन नाही । प्रीति न पद सरोज मन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥
अब मोहि भा भरोस हनुमंता । बिनु हरिकृपा मिलहिं नहिं संता ॥ ४ ॥
जौं रघुबीर अनुग्रह कीन्हा । तौ तुम्ह मोहि दरसु हठि दीन्हा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu pavanasuta rahani hamārī. jimi dasananhi mahum̐ jībha bicārī. 1.
tāta kabahum̐ mōhi jāni anāthā. karihahim̐ kṛpā bhānukula nāthā. 2.
tāmasa tanu kachu sādhana nāhīm̐. prīti na pada sarōja mana māhīm̐. 3.
aba mōhi bhā bharōsa hanumantā. binu harikṛpā milahim̐ nahim̐ santā. 4.
jauṁ raghubīra anugraha kīnhā. tau tumha mōhi darasu haṭhi dīnhā. 5.

[Once a good and friendly relationship was established between Vibhishan and Hanuman, the former invited the latter inside his home, and then they chatted amiably for a while. Vibhishan expressed his excess of happiness at meeting Hanuman, and told him about his pitiful existence amongst the cruel demons from whom he was always in danger. Vibhishan also wished to know if Lord Ram ever remembered him as he was one of Lord’s loyal devotees, but who unfortunately got trapped in the midst of sinful demons due to the fiat of fate.]

Vibhishan said to Hanuman, ‘Listen oh the son of the wind-god. My life (here in Lanka, amongst the demons) is similar to the precarious condition of the poor tongue which has to survive surrounded by sharp teeth, for I am in constant fear of the ten-headed Ravana¹. (1)

Oh my dear (tāta)! Tell me, will the ‘Lord of the Solar Race’ (“bhānukula nāthā”; Lord Ram who was a descendant of the Solar Race) show his grace, mercy and kindness upon me keeping in view the fact that I am humble and without a protector and guardian with me (except the Lord)²? (2)

For I have an evil body (as I am born in the sinful, evil and despicable demon race), and with this body it has not been possible for me to do any worthwhile good or noble deed that can be called meritorious, and on the strength of which I could have claimed some sort of eligibility to gain spiritual peace and happiness.

Besides this, I have not known, being a demon myself and living amongst demons, what true love and affection for the Lord is, and so I cannot that I have the required level of love and affection for the holy lotus like feet of the Lord (which is expected from a true devotee). (3)

But nevertheless, after having met you, who are a saintly soul, I am now certain and I fully convinced that the Lord is indeed benevolent and favourable towards me, for otherwise it would not have been possible for me to meet a saint like you³. (4)

For sooth and without gainsay, it is certainly true that you have voluntarily met me only because Lord Ram has been benevolent and gracious towards me⁴. [This is because meeting a saint is one of the biggest spiritual blessings that the Lord grants to a creature as it paves the way for the latter's deliverance and emancipation. Meeting a saint gives immense spiritual peace and bliss to the tormented soul as I have now witnessed myself. After meeting you I feel very happy and blissful; I now am certain that the day of my deliverance from suffering in this den of demons has finally arrived.]' (5)

[Note—¹Just like the humble tongue that lives a precarious life in the mouth surrounded by sharp teeth from all sides, which can cut, bite and make it bleed at any moment if it dares to get in their way, Vibhishan also lives in constant danger of life and torture if he peradventure annoys his elder brother Ravana, the ten-headed one (*jimi dasananhi mahum'jībha bicārī*).

As long as the tongue does not get in the way of the teeth, it is allowed to speak and eat, i.e. do whatever it likes, but the moment it steps beyond its threshold it immediately gets bitten off fiercely by the teeth. Similarly, as long as Vibhishan keeps to himself and minds his business, Ravana does not bother or torment him, obviously because they were brothers and both had done severe Tapa together to get boons from the creator Brahma. In fact it must be accepted, and Ravana must be given due credit for it, that he allowed Vibhishan quite a lot of freedom to practice his spiritual beliefs, for it is a truth that Ravana had tolerated his bother putting up the signs of Lord Ram—Ravana's personal enemy and of the whole of the demon race in general by the virtue of his being an incarnation of Lord Vishnu whom the demons regard as their arch enemy and nemesis—in the front of his home in the middle of Lanka. Say, which king would ever allow anyone in his kingdom to openly display the signs of his enemy, such as the court of arms etc., on his house; would he not be charged with treason, betrayal, treachery and sedition? But Ravana tolerated it! {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 5 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it.}

Can it be denied therefore that it was indeed and truly an excellent sign of Ravana's noble heart and its secret piety and holiness, of his tolerant nature, and of his fraternal love for his brother whom he loved especially more because he was the only one in the whole family who was devoted to Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Being, and as a result the only one who would carry forward the line of the demon race at the end of the war, who will be the lone torch-bearer of the glorious name of the demon family descended from illustrious sage Pulastya?

Just how apt and true this metaphor of the 'tongue and the teeth' vis-à-vis Vibhishan and Ravana is will be proved a little later in our Story when we read that at the time Vibhishan, in goof faith and keeping the welfare of this brother in mind, had advised his brother Ravana to give Sita back to Lord Ram and avoid a ruinous war, Ravana publicly insulted Vibhishan and kicked him, ordering him to quit his kingdom

as he was a traitor praising his enemy. This led Vibhishan to abandon Lanka and take shelter with Lord Ram, joining the Lord in his war efforts. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precede Doha no. 38—to Doha no. 41.}

²Vibhishan asked Hanuman most eagerly: “Hanuman, tell me dear, will Lord Ram arrange things and maneuver them in such a favourable way that I am finally extricated from this den of sinful demons, and can live a free and happy life like other devotees of the Lord? Will the Lord accept me inspite of my being a member of the despicable demon race, and a brother of the evil Ravana? I don’t think that I am qualified enough for this honour, but I rely on the merciful and gracious nature of Lord Ram who, I am sure, will forgive me for any misdeeds that I may have done or the lack of good virtues that I ought to have possessed, except that I am devoted completely to the Lord. Lord Ram is renowned as being the Angel Guardian and the benevolent Lord of all those who have no one to protect and save them from sufferings; it is on this fame of the Lord that I put all my life at stake. So Hanuman, tell me please, will Lord Ram cast a compassionate glance at me for once?”

³Vibhishan says that the very fact that a great devotee of Lord Ram and a soul as pious and saintly as that of Hanuman had voluntarily come visiting him proves that Lord Ram is kindly disposed towards him, because meeting a true saint is only possible by the grace of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 69 where Garud has expressed an exactly similar sentiment towards the saintly crow Kaagbhusund when the latter narrated the divine story of Lord Ram to the former which gave him immense degree of peace and spiritual bliss.}

⁴There are many more instances in Ram Charit Manas where it is reiterated that meeting with a saint is a blessing for the soul, and it implies that Lord Ram is indeed benevolent on a person who is fortunate to meet a saint. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37—to Doha no. 38; (ii) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 45; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 13, 21 that precede Doha no. 121; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 123, (v) Chaupai line nos. 6-9 that precede Doha no. 125.]

सुनहु बिभीषन प्रभु कै रीती । करहिं सदा सेवक पर प्रीती ॥ ६ ॥

कहहु कवन मैं परम कुलीना । कपि चंचल सबहीं बिधि हीना ॥ ७ ॥

प्रात लेइ जो नाम हमारा । तेहि दिन ताहि न मिलै अहारा ॥ ८ ॥

sunahu bibhīṣana prabhu kai rītī. karahīm sadā sēvaka para prītī. 6.
kahahu kavana mair̥ parama kulīnā. kapi cañcala sabahīm bidhi hīnā. 7.
prāta lē'i jō nāma hamārā. tēhi dina tāhi na milai ahārā. 8.

Hanuman replied, ‘Listen Vibhishan. I shall tell you the principles that the Lord (Sri Ram) always follows: it is that he always and invariably shows his affection and benevolence towards his ‘sevaks’ (i.e. to his devotees, those who serve him, those who follow him), for this is his wont and habit¹. (6)

Look at me. Say, in which noble race or superior clan am I born (that would have entitled me to obtain Lord Ram's favour and grace, or the honour that the Lord has granted me by picking me as his messenger who would get the unmatched glory of finding Sita and be instrumental in eliminating the demon race in order to help the supreme Lord Vishnu to keep his promise made to the gods and mother earth)?

To wit, I am born in a lowly and humble race that is known by the name of Kapi (literally the monkey race), and by nature we are fickle and frivolous, as well as devoid of any worthwhile virtues. So what claim do I have for getting any honour that I have been granted?

[To wit, I am a living proof of Lord Ram's graceful and benevolent nature that he has shown so much grace upon a humble and lowly creature like me just because the Lord realized that I am totally and faithfully devoted to him, and have deep and undiluted affection for him.] (7)

Indeed, I am born in such a lowly race that if anyone peradventure pronounces our name in the morning then it is regarded as such a bad omen for him that he would not get anything to eat that day. (8)

[Note—¹Refer also to Ram Charit Manas, (a) Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 183; and (b) Uttar Kand, (i) Doha no. 86 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it; (ii) Doha no. 87 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.

दो०. अस मैं अधम सखा सुनु मोहू पर रघुबीर ।

कीन्ही कृपा सुमिरि गुन भरे बिलोचन नीर ॥ ७ ॥

dōhā.

asa maim adhama sakhā sunu mōhū para raghubīra.
kīnhī kṛpā sumiri guna bharē bilōcana nīra. 7.

My dear friend (sakhā). I am indeed of such a low birth, yet Lord Ram (Raghubir) had been so merciful and gracious upon me (that I can't describe as it is beyond my imagination).'

Saying this, and recalling Lord Ram's gracious nature and glorious virtues, Hanuman's eyes were filled with tears (of gratitude and thankfulness). (Doha no. 7)

चौ०. जानतहूँ अस स्वामि बिसारी । फिरहिं ते काहे न होहिं दुखारी ॥ १ ॥

एहि बिधि कहत राम गुन ग्रामा । पावा अनिर्बाच्य बिश्रामा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jānatahūṁ asa svāmi bisārī. phirahim tē kāhē na hōhim dukhārī. 1.
ēhi bidhi kahata rāma guna grāmā. pāvā anirbācya biśrāmā. 2.

[Hanuman was so overwhelmed with emotions that he could speak no further for a moment. Then he regained his composure and said—] 'Even after being aware of such an excellent and obliging nature of Lord Ram if a creature still wonders

elsewhere seeking protection for himself, if he seeks succour and solace from his sufferings elsewhere, say why will such an unfortunate one not become unhappy and subjected to sufferings and miseries of all kinds?¹ (1)

In this way, by remembering and reiterating the many virtues of Lord Ram, and singing the Lord's glories, both these blessed and noble souls (Vibhishan and Hanuman) derived immense bliss and peace which was so sublime and profound that it cannot be described in words². (2)

[Note—¹For indeed such a creature is like a fool who has abandoned an eternal spring of happiness right in his own courtyard and goes searching for water in a desert with a bucket in hand!

²The level of ecstasy and beatitude that Vibhishan and Hanuman enjoyed during those moments were of a sublime quality, the intensity, the effulgence and the depth of which was so great that the situation can be understood by us by natural instinct or by experience only, but which is extremely difficult to explain by employing words, as the latter, no matter how best and with skill they are selected from the dictionary, would not do justice to the exalted emotional state that prevailed at that time, for sentiments of such spiritual profundity cannot be butted-and-bounded in any language.]

पुनि सब कथा बिभीषन कही । जेहि बिधि जनकसुता तहँ रही ॥ ३ ॥
तब हनुमंत कहा सुनु भ्राता । देखी चहउँ जानकी माता ॥ ४ ॥
जुगुति बिभीषन सकल सुनाई । चलेउ पवनसुत बिदा कराई ॥ ५ ॥

puni saba kathā bibhīṣana kahī. jēhi bidhi janakasutā taham̐ rahī. 3.
taba hanumanta kahā sunu bhrātā. dēkhī caha'um̐ jānakī mātā. 4.
juguti bibhīṣana sakala sunā'ī. calē'u pavanasuta bidā karā'ī. 5.

[After some time of silence during which tears rolled down their eyes and they remained submerged in experiencing ecstasy and blissfulness, Vibhishan and Hanuman once again regained their composure and focused their mind to practical affairs of this mundane world, to the work at hand that had to be urgently accomplished.]

So, picking up the thread of conversation with Hanuman, Vibhishan told him everything about where and in what condition Janaksuta (“janakasutā”; literally the daughter of king Janak; i.e. Sita) lived there (in Lanka)¹. (3)

Then Hanuman expressed his desire to meet her, saying to Vibhishan, ‘Listen brother. I wish to see mother Sita. [Prithee, please now tell me how I can go and meet Sita easily; which would be the convenient way for me. It is day-time, so please tell me how I can sneak in undetected; by which path must I enter the place where she is incarcerated without causing an alarm.]’ (4)

Upon this request, Vibhishan disclosed to Hanuman how to manipulate things and maneuver his way through the secret path by which he can sneak in the garden where Sita sits and go close to her².

Armed with this vital piece of information, the son of the wind god took leave of Vibhishan and proceeded ahead with his mission. (5)

[Note—¹Earlier in Doha no. 6, Hanuman had told Vibhishan all about himself and about Lord Ram. Obviously this narration had informed Vibhishan about the reason why Hanuman had come to Lanka. After this initial briefing and introduction, both Vibhishan and Hanuman became close friends, so close indeed that they were like two siblings who loved each other dearly and were meeting after ages of separation. When this emotional storm subsided and they were back in the practical world to face its harsh realities, they realized that there are things to be done on priority basis. So now Vibhishan disclosed to Hanuman the site of Sita's captivity in Lanka, and the condition in which she lived there.

Another important point to note is of the use of the word “janakasutā” for Sita. King Janak was an ascetic-king, i.e. though he was a king but internally he was an exalted ascetic as he remained detached from all worldly affairs, maintained a distance from all material attractions, practices stellar self-control, and enjoyed meditation even while appearing to attend to the affairs of the world and doing his duties diligently. By employing this epithet of “janakasutā” for Sita Vibhishan meant that like her father king Janak, Sita too lived in Lanka like a true ascetic, remaining engrossed in meditation, practicing strict self-control, be detached to the world that surrounds her, and was able to maintain her calmness and quietude in the midst of the turmoil that characterized a land of demons.

²Vibhishan's advice came handy to Hanuman as he now was equipped with knowledge of the physical topography and plan of the place. With this information it was easy for Hanuman to avoid places where it would be easy to detect an outsider; he could now pass through some secret corridors and entrance chambers known only to a handful of the demons who were either members of the royal family of Lanka like Vibhishan himself was, or to a very few of the royal soldiers who were assigned the duty as body-guards. Vibhishan must have told Hanuman the time when these few body-guards changed their duties, because this was the right time when he could safely enter as these guards would then be distracted.

The fact is that Vibhishan played an extremely crucial and vital role in the entire enterprise of freeing Sita and winning the war of Lanka. Firstly, he helped Hanuman to locate Sita exactly and guided him to her; and secondly, as we shall read in due course, it was Vibhishan's help that enabled Lord Ram to finally kill Ravana, because when all efforts had failed to bring Ravana down Lord Ram looked to Vibhishan to tell him the secret of his invincibility, at which Vibhishan disclosed that Ravana could only be slayed if the Lord shot an arrow directly at his navel to pierce a pitcher that contained the nectar that provides him with eternity, and suck it out. This has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 102—to Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 103.]

करि सोइ रूप गयउ पुनि तहवाँ । बन असोक सीता रह जहवाँ ॥ ६ ॥

देखि मनहि महुँ कीन्ह प्रनामा । बैठेहिं बीति जात निसि जामा ॥ ७ ॥

कृस तनु सीस जटा एक बेनी । जपति हृदयँ रघुपति गुन श्रेनी ॥ ८ ॥

kari sō'i rūpa gaya'u puni tahavām̃. bana asōka sītā raha jahavām̃. 6.
dēkhi manahi mahum̃ kīnha pranāmā. baiṭhēhiṃ bīti jāta nisi jāmā. 7.
kr̥sa tanu sīsa jaṭā ēka bēnī. japati hr̥dayam̃ raghupati guna śrēnī. 8.

Hanuman assumed that same form by which he had entered Lanka (i.e. he assumed a very small form which was so tiny that no one would pay attention to him), and went to the garden known as 'Ashok'¹ where Sita lived (or was held captive)*. (6)

When he saw Sita, Hanuman mentally bowed to her reverentially. He observed that she had been sitting still, deeply lost in thoughts. The impression that he got was that she had not slept throughout the night, and had been sitting in the same position for quite some time². (7)

[In the following verses and the Doha that follows herein below, the pitiable condition of Sita is being described.]

She was emaciated in her body; on her head there was a thick tuft of matted hairs formed by the plait of hairs that had become dry and luster-less.

Deep down in her anguished heart she was quietly repeating the holy name of Lord Raghupati (Ram), remembering the Lord and recounting the long legend of his glorious virtues. (8)

[Note—¹When Ravana brought Sita to Lanka, he had put her up in this garden which was a royal garden full of beautiful trees. She sat in the shadow of a huge Ashoka tree. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 26 that precedes Doha no. 29.}]

This place was so called as it was so pleasant and comforting that anyone who entered it felt relieved of his sorrow, misery and grief. The 'Ahoka' tree itself may have two connotations, viz. (i) a tree of the species 'Jonesia Ahoka' or 'Saraca Indica'; and (ii) a huge shade-providing tree with thick foliage and extended branches.

This garden also doubled as an orchard because besides having flowering trees it also was full of fruit bearing trees. This will be soon evident when Hanuman rampaged through it, eating fruits and uprooting trees. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 17—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 18.}]

* The location of the "Ashok grove or garden" where Sita was held captive by Ravana was at the epicenter of the developments that led to the ultimate downfall of the great demon empire and the slaying of its powerful and invincible king Ravana—because it was here that Sita was placed ever since she was brought by Ravana after abducting her from Lord Ram's hermitage in Panchavati, it was here that Hanuman met her, it was in this garden that the first battle of the war was fought between Hanuman and the forces of Ravana, and it was here that Sita stayed and did severe Tapa (suffering hardship for some noble cause, to do penances and austerities) till the war finally ended and Lord Ram, who was a manifestation of Lord Vishnu, the Supreme Lord of the world, was able to successfully fulfill his promises made to the gods and mother earth that he would eliminate the scourge of the evil demons so as to free the world of their burden.

This “Ashok grove or garden” is important for another reason too—for its location in Lanka lent its name to the 5th Canto of the epic story of the Ramayana, because this Canto is called “Sundar Kand”. Why is this Chapter called “Sundar Kand”?

The reason is very interesting, and it is this: Lanka was established on a great, undulating mountain range located in the middle of the southern ocean. It had three high summits. This is why the mountain was called ‘Trikoort’—having three summits. The city of Lanka was established on these three summits. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Baal Kand, Doha no. 178 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it ; and (ii) Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 28.}

These three summits were not the type of conventional conical tips having sharp, craggy mass of rocks that we usually find on mountain tops, because such summits cannot have a large flourishing city on them. So it is obvious that the three summits of Trikoort were like three high plateaus. The names of these three plateaus were ‘Neel’, ‘Sundar’ and ‘Subel’. The first plateau named ‘Neel’ was the sight of the grand city of Lanka; the second plateau named ‘Sundar’ was the sight of the Ashok garden, and the third plateau named ‘Subel’ was the sight of the battle-field where the epic war was fought.

The second summit was the famed counterpart of the ‘Sumeru’ mountain in the north. The Sumeru was inhabited by the gods who lived in the heaven (i.e. in the northern direction of the compass pointing symbolically to heaven), while the demons lived on ‘Trikoort’ in the mortal world (i.e. in the southern direction of the compass). The Trikoort was conceptualized and built to rival Sumeru; it was the capital of the demon kingdom of Lanka, and a wonderfully decked-up golden city.

The third summit was called ‘Sundar’, meaning beautiful and magnificent, because its Ashok garden was exceptionally fascinating and charming, and singular beauty and magnificence had no rival in the world; special care was taken for its upkeep as it was the royal retreat of the kings of Lanka. It is this summit known as ‘Sundar’ which has been used to name this 5th Canto of the Ramayan for reasons explained herein above.

Out of these three summits, which were flat lands like large plateaus, the one on the northern side of the island of Lanka was called ‘Subel’. It is here that Hanuman landed when he went to Lanka in search of Sita (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 3), and it is here that Lord Ram landed with his army of monkeys and bears when he went to free her and eliminate the demons (refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11).

In both these cases we read that it is from the top of this Mt. Subel that Hanuman and Lord Ram surveyed the city of Lanka and its fort that were in the southern direction. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 3; and (ii) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 13.}

Therefore it naturally follows that the third summit known as ‘Sundar’, where Sita was held captive in its beautiful garden or a forest known as Ashok, was at the further end of Lanka, to the south of the Trikoort mountain.

To wit, Subel was at the northern end, Trikoort at the center, and Sundar at the far or the southern end of Lanka.

Subel was the flat land where the demons used to do physical exercises and practice martial art of warfare; it was from here that they would keep an hawk eye on the ocean lying on the north because the land mass from where there was any

possibility of an invasion of Lanka was on this side, a mere 800 miles off the shore of Lanka as compared to its other sides where there was no land for thousands of miles around.

Since the summit called 'Sundar' was at the far end of Lanka, neither Hanuman nor Lord Ram and his ministers could see it and its Ashok grove. From Subel they could only see Trikoot, the capital city of the kingdom of Lanka.

Lanka was initially conceived as a domain city of Kuber, the treasurer of the gods; it was constructed by Vishwakarma, the gods' architect. This being the case, Lanka was an image of the abode of the gods in heaven, the city on Mt. Sumeru. When Ravana snatched it from Kuber, he made Lanka as the capital of the demon race which he headed. Since Lanka rivaled the city of the gods in heaven, its grandeur and magnificence can be well imagined.

We can cite other instances in the Ramayan where the name of a particular Canto or Chapter is assigned according to the chief events covered under that Canto, or the name of the place which is the epicenter of main events. For example, the 1st Canto is called 'Baal Kand' because it deals with the birth and the early life of Lord Ram that covers his adolescence. {The word "Baal" means a child or a boy.}

Similarly, the 2nd Canto is called 'Ayodhya Kand' because this chapter deals with all the developments that led to Lord Ram coming to the forest, and what were its consequences for the rest of the kingdom. The 3rd Canto is titled 'Aranya Kand' because it describes the Lord's journey through the wild forest beyond the borders of his kingdom. {The word "Aranya" means dense, wild forest.}

'Kishkindha Kand', the 4th Canto, derives its name from the geographical area where the tribal kingdom of the same name where Lord Ram spent the next phase of his life, meeting Sugriv, Hanuman, Angad etc., and forging new relationships.

The Canto where the epic war was fought is appropriately named 'Lanka Kand'. This is the 6th Canto.

And finally, the last and the concluding Canto, the 7th, is called 'Uttar Kand', symbolizing the end of the narration. {The word "Uttar" refers to the concluding part of a narrative.}

The above note clearly explains why the 5th Canto of the Ramayan is universally called "Sundar Kand".

²It was the early morning hours of the day, just after dawn. As we have read above, Hanuman met Vibhishan at the time he woke up and pronounced Lord Ram's name. Pious and religious people are supposed to rise very early in the morning, much before dawn; the generally accepted time is around 4-5 a.m.

The conversation between Hanuman and Vibhishan must not have lasted long, and immediately after that Hanuman went to the garden.

Therefore, it was the time when the city of Lanka was still half asleep as demons were late risers. It ought to be noted that demons are called 'Nishichara' (nisicara) which literally means 'one who moves during the night', which obviously means 'one who remains active during the night and keeps late hours'. Such creatures usually sleep late during day to compensate for loss of sleep during the night.

To wit, when Hanuman first saw Sita he found her sitting with legs either crossed or bent at the knees, her hands encircling her legs and clasped in front, and her head hung over her bosom as if she was brooding while crouching or squatting. She looked tired and haggard; her hairs were unwashed and tied carelessly into a thick bun on her head; and her clothes were virtually ragged and unkempt. The general atmosphere of sadness, dejection, gloom and despair hung so heavily around her that

it was not difficult for Hanuman to get an idea of the gravity of Sita's sufferings instantaneously.]

दो०. निज पद नयन दिँ मन राम पद कमल लीन ।
परम दुखी भा पवनसुत देखि जानकी दीन ॥ ८ ॥

dōhā.

nija pada nayana di'ēṁṁ mana rāma pada kamala līna.
parama dukhī bhā pavanasuta dēkhi jānakī dīna. 8.

Janki (Sita) sat with her lustreless eyes cast down and fixed at her feet, while her Mana (mind and heart) was fixed on the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram¹.

When the son of the wind god thus saw her pitiable condition of overwhelming misery and despair, he was filled with utter grief and sorrow. (Doha no. 8)

[Note—¹This is a posture usually common with people who have lost their dear ones, and are in a stupefied condition of excess of grief and despair. A person who deeply grieves for someone who is very dear to one's heart would sit quietly and forlorn in a corner, lost in his own thoughts, and looking blankly at no where in particular.

Sita sat with a lowered head; she constantly looked down towards the ground with low-cast eyes transfixed as if in a dazed stupor, so emotionally shocked and anguished she was. She did not sleep in the night, and her constant gaze made her eyes bloodshot. Her mind and heart, meanwhile, were engrossed in remembering Lord Ram; she fixed her attention on the holy feet of the Lord as a means of finding some solace and succour in the face of abject despair and hopelessness.

Happy events, cheerful days and moments of laughter of her past life glided across her mind like fluffy white clouds floating across the firmament during winter. She recollected the playful days of her childhood and happy days spent in dreaming during her youth, she remembered the day of the Bow-breaking ceremony when she had so fervently prayed to all the gods and deities she ever paid her respects to so that Lord Ram would break the bow and marry her, she vividly recollected how she had literally jumped with exhilaration and ecstasy when her prayers were indeed answered and the Lord snapped the bow with a thunderous roar that reverberated throughout the world and deafened one and all, but which sounded like sweet music to her ears, the memory of the moments of her putting the victory garland around the Lord's neck came clear as crystal to her mind, and she drew a deep breath and gasped in agony, she recollected the details of her marriage ceremony in its finest and closest detail, she remembered how lovingly she was welcomed in her in-law's household where she found love in abundance, even surpassing that she was accustomed to at her father's place at Lanka, the joyful days of married life she spent with her beloved husband Lord Ram in Ayodhya and the sudden strike of misfortune that turned the world around her when the Lord was asked to go to the forest for fourteen long years came rushing to her memory like a train of white clouds followed by a menacing bank of dark clouds that obscures the sunlight and turns the sky dark and gloomy, she recalled the moment when she decided to accompany the Lord to the forest, his attempts to dissuade her because the horrors she would face in the wild would be too unbearable for her, and the firmness with which she had said 'no, she won't stay

back’ and the Lord gave his consent to her to follow him, then she remembered those long days and months of the years they, she and her beloved Lord Ram as well as her son-like brother-in-law Laxman, had spent happily wandering in the forest, enjoying a carefree life like birds freed from a gilded cage do, smiling and wondering at the vast vista of beauty of Mother Nature that spread before her eyes all around, and imbibing the nectar of un-describable happiness and sweetness that was all hers to drink as much as she wished during the days, months and years gone by.

Sita was lost in this pleasant reverie, and during these sweet musings and happy recollections that went past the canvas of her memory like bright charming pictures cast on a screen that mesmerize the spectator so much that he forgets all about himself and his surroundings, Sita was in a state of stupor as she sat dazed and immobile, staring at the ground like a frozen picture cast in a frame, and now and then she would sigh or gasp in agony, drawing a deep breath and making exerting her remaining strength to hold back the hot tears that wished to roll down her cheeks like lava from a pent-up volcano.

Remember my dear readers, the ‘Sita’ whom we see here is a ‘shadow or an image or an apparition of the real Sita’ because she has been put in the safe custody of the Fire God by Lord Ram at the beginning of this unfortunate phase of the Story. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 24.}

Different shades of thoughts passed over the firmament of Sita’s mind. She was at once gloomy and dejected for one moment, feeling that she was rapidly sinking in an abyss, because despairing thoughts of doom and helplessness clouded her brow like banks of thick dark clouds that obscure the light of the sun, then at the next moment this cloud floated past and bright sunshine shone through as she remembered Lord Ram’s love for her, his unparallel valour, strength and abilities, and she was sure that sooner or later she would be resurrected by the Lord only if she managed to hold on for some more time.

Buffeted in this way between abject gloom and light of hope she finally decided to follow the maxim of life: that to have faith, to wait, and to hope, are the fundamental pillars of life, for if there is no faith, if there is no hope, and if one doesn’t have the patience to wait then life would lose its meaning. So therefore, she took a firm resolution to gather all her courage and wits together, to hope for her redemption, to wait for the arrival of the Lord, to have faith in her love and devotion for him, to give Providence time to regret for its errors, if they be any, and repent by bringing cheer back to her.

During these testing times of misfortune, she also discovered another truth of life: that when one is always enjoying happiness and goodness of life he does not realize how fortunate he has been, and he accuses the Lord God for the slightest feeling of uneasiness if, even for a moment, things do not happen the way he wants them to happen; but when he slips in a deep cavern of grief, sadness and despair where no sunlight enters, only then he begins to realize how merciful and benevolent the Lord God had been towards him when the Lord had been showering him with bountiful blessings pouring down upon him like rainfall, for now he begins to contrast his present situation of misery with the bright days of happiness when even the slightest deviation from the routine of cheer and joy had made him accuse the Lord of being cruel to him or neglecting him. Woe to him, for now he curses himself instead of cursing the merciful Lord. The contrast makes him wisened and pray to the Lord God, saying in supplication, “Oh my dearest Lord; please forgive me for my foolishness and once again show your everlasting grace on me as you had always

been showing to me ere I stupidly accused of neglecting or being harsh to me, and I vow to you that I will never ever complain. Nay, not only not complain, but I will spend the rest of my life thanking you myself and telling the world my story so that others who are as stupid as me would learn a lesson before it is too late for them.”

These and sundry other like thoughts clouded her brow and filled her agonized mind as she sat there under the shade of the tree in the Ashok garden.]

चौ०. तरु पल्लव महुँ रहा लुकाई । करइ बिचार करौं का भाई ॥ १ ॥
तेहि अवसर रावनु तहुँ आवा । संग नारि बहु किए बनावा ॥ २ ॥
बहु बिधि खल सीतहि समुझावा । साम दान भय भेद देखावा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

taru pallava mahum̐ rahā lukā'ī. kara'i bicāra karaum̐ kā bhā'ī. 1.
tēhi avasara rāvanu taham̐ āvā. saṅga nāri bahu ki'em̐ banāvā. 2.
bahu bidhi khala sītahi samujhāvā. sāma dāna bhaya bhēda dēkhāvā. 3.

Hanuman hid himself in the thick foliage of the tree under whose shade Sita sat in a gloomy and melancholic state, contemplating in his mind the next action he should take, and talking to himself, ‘Come brother, what should I do next?’¹ (1)

Just at that moment Ravana came to that spot; he was accompanied by a horde of ladies who were gaily adorned in many different ways². (2)

That wicked fellow tried his best to convince Sita (to surrender herself to him), using all the tricks he could think of: such as employing polite persuasion, tempting her with gifts and treasures, using threats and coercive methods, and showing her the difference it would make to her situation if she conceded to his demands on the one hand, and the suffering she would have to endure if she refused his overtures on the other hand³. (3)

[Note—¹What was Hanuman thinking of during those moments; what was the reason of his uncertainty and procrastination? The answer is this: He had seen Sita sitting in a meditative posture, remembering Lord Ram and muttering silently the Lord’s holy name. She appeared like a female ascetic deeply immersed in her spiritual practice. It is absolutely wrong to disturb an ascetic during the time he or she is submerged deep in meditation and remembering the Supreme Being; it would be a highly sinful thing to disturb an ascetic during this time. So Hanuman thought that he is obliged to wait, at least till the time Sita got up to attend to some of her routine chores of the day, such as to attend to Nature’s call, wash her mouth, eat something in order to survive, and so on.

But he could not be sure when that will be; perhaps she may remain sitting thus for the whole day; or may be she would be taken away to some other place for confinement as a precaution by her captors to avoid her being detected by a spy sent by her husband; or may be some fierce demon guard may come to guard her by the time Hanuman had the opportunity to introduce himself to her.

He also feared that if he suddenly stood before her it would break her stupor, and she would be so shocked that she may die due to it even before Hanuman had the time to speak a word. Supposing she screamed when she saw him; this would surely

be catastrophic. He did not wish to create a scene before introducing himself to Sita and conveying Lord Ram's message to her.

Time was precious and it was running out fast. This worried Hanuman as he waited behind the leaves, unable to decide what next to do. But this wait proved to be a blessing in disguise for him, for soon Ravana arrived there with quite a few females in tow. Then Hanuman thanked God for his delay in introducing himself to Sita, for had he done so and was found with her at the time Ravana came there, all hell would have broken loose and Sita would have been put to grave risk.

²It ought to be noted that Ravana did not approach Sita alone; he was accompanied by a number of females. These females may have been demonesses or ladies whom he had brought to Lanka as trophies of his many conquests. Nevertheless, he did not approach Sita alone as he wished to be sure that no one would ever accuse him of doing any physical wrong to her while she was in seclusion; the presence of not one or two but many females during his interaction with Sita pre-empted and prevented such evil accusations.

Another important point is this: He never allowed male demons to come near Sita; only female demons were allowed to guard her. This was another precaution Ravana took for the physical safety of Sita, and to ensure her privacy, self-respect and dignity. He did not want to take the risk of allowing male demons to in any way defile the purity and chastity of Sita even by their promiscuous glances or lustful thoughts.

³Remember: Ravana had brought Sita and put her in this garden with due respect that he would have given to his mother, and also with the awareness that she may prove to be the source of his deliverance from the sinful body of a demon if he could induce Lord Ram to come and kill him to free Sita. These facts are clearly hinted in (i) Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23; (ii) Adhyatma Ramayan, Aranya Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 30-31; 37; and Canto 7, verse no. 65.

Like Lord Ram who had concealed his true identity of the all-knowing Supreme Lord of the world, who had himself designed the plan of Sita's abduction to make it a pretext of eliminating the scourge of the evil demons but acted and behaved in such a way that he had no inkling of what had happened to her, weeping for her and searching for her like an ordinary human being, Ravana too wanted to act his part of a demon to perfection. This is the only and the one reason why he seemed to behave lustfully towards Sita, pretending to tempt her and even coerce her to surrender herself to his carnal desires and sensual pleasures.

So though Ravana pretended to have lustful designs on Sita, though he threatened her of dire consequences, though he tempted her and teased her—but he never actually harmed her physically or touched her inappropriately. This is remarkable for a demon like Ravana who was famed for his pervert and promiscuous nature.]

कह रावनु सुनु सुमुखि सयानी । मंदोदरी आदि सब रानी ॥ ४ ॥
तव अनुचरीं करउँ पन मोरा । एक बार बिलोकु मम ओरा ॥ ५ ॥

kaha rāvanu sunu sumukhi sayānī. mandōdarī ādi saba rānī. 4.
tava anucarīm kara'um̐ pana mōrā. ēka bāra bilōku mama ōrā. 5.

Ravana said, 'Oh the wise and intelligent one who has a pretty face (sumukhi sayānī); listen to me (sunu). Look, there is Mandodari and many other queens in my palace¹. (4)

I promise to you that I would be your servant if only you would look at me but once.²,
(5)

[Note—¹To wit, Ravana assured Sita that she would be well looked after, and she would have other ladies such as Mandodari and other queens to give her company. She will not feel alone; she would enjoy all the royal privileges that other females did.

²This clearly shows that Sita has not looked at Ravana even once after he had abducted her. In the context of his inner feelings whereby he had brought her with a desire to attain liberation and deliverance from his demon life through her medium, and also with a view that she was like a mother to him, this request of Ravana assumes a different meaning than what it appears to be on the surface.

There is a plea for mercy hidden in the heart of Ravana when he asks Sita to look at his face; he knows that if Sita, whom he treated like a 'mother', looked up and saw him, she would immediately feel pity for his demonic body and have mercy for his soul. She would immediately read what was in his mind as any mother would in the case of her child. Sita would see a prayer on Ravana's quivering lips; she would see a plea for mercy in his eyes welling up with tears; she would observe how he bows his head subtly before her both in reverence and in shame; she would read his face to understand his inner thoughts and what was going on in his thumping heart.

But Sita did not look up. Why? Was she merciless; was she not a mother willing to do everything for her child? No, it is not that. The real reason is different, and this reason saddened Sita's heart too at the subtle plane. It is this: If she showed any compassion to Ravana and spared him from death, what would be the result? There would be no war, and thus the cruel demons who had unleashed a reign of terror on the world, and for the end of which terror the Supreme Lord had to come personally on the prayers of the gods and mother earth—these demons won't die, and the scourge would continue as before. In fact the disease symbolised by the demons may even increase manifold because Ravana would be emboldened with the knowledge that the Mother of the world in the person of Sita has become benevolent upon him and has promised her protection to him. This would mean the whole exercise would become null and void.

Sita, being the 'Mother of the world', brooded on this point; she concluded that she cannot show grace upon this single child of hers at the cost of allowing the rest of the world suffer at his hands because all the living beings were her off-spring. It was in the thus in the larger interest of this world that Sita refused to look up at Ravana.]

तू धरि ओट कहति बैदेही । सुमिरि अवधपति परम सनेही ॥ ६ ॥

सुनु दसमुख खद्योत प्रकासा । कबहुँ कि नलिनी करइ बिकासा ॥ ७ ॥

अस मन समुझु कहति जानकी । खल सुधि नहिं रघुबीर बान की ॥ ८ ॥
सठ सूनें हरि आनेहि मोही । अधम निलज्ज लाज नहिं तोही ॥ ९ ॥

tr̥ṇa dhari ōṭa kahati baidēhī. sumiri avadhapati parama sanēhī. 6.
sunu dasamukha khadyōṭa prakāsā. kabahum̐ ki nalinī kara'i bikāsā. 7.
asa mana samujhu kahati jānakī. khala sudhi nahim̐ raghubīra bāna kī. 8.
saṭha sūnēm̐ hari ānēhi mōhī. adhama nilajja lāja nahim̐ tōhī. 9.

Keeping a blade of grass between herself and Ravana¹, and remembering and invoking the Lord of Ayodhya (Lord Ram) who was very dear to her (sumiri avadhapati parama sanēhī), Vaidehi (Sita; the one who had no physical body as she was only an image or an apparition of her true self) spoke indignantly, rebuffing Ravana sternly, and telling him in unequivocal terms to mind his tongue and behave himself --- (6)

‘Listen, oh you ten-headed monster! Can a lotus flower ever expect to bloom in the feeble light of the fire-fly?²’ (7)

Janki (Sita) warned Ravana, ‘Ponder over what I have just said; think over it. You wretched fellow; you are not acquainted with Lord Ram’s arrows.

[To wit, you do not know the fire that spews forth from the arrows shot by the Lord; this fire would burn you and your race to ashes. You do not realize your doom in your haughtiness and arrogance. Be ware!] (8)

You wicked and sinful rogue! You had abducted me when you found me alone in the hermitage. Oh you lowly and fallen one; aren’t you ashamed of yourself? Shame to you and your manhood!

[If you had the guts, why did you not openly challenge Lord Ram and defeat him in battle to bring me like you had done in the case of other women whom you had brought as trophies of your wars? You rascal and pervert creature! It was because you were terrified of Lord Ram and had no stomach to face his arrows. And now you show yourself before a helpless woman. You should bury yourself in the muck of shame and guilt! Woe betide the wretch who stole me like a thief, imagining that he would lay his evil hands on me, forgetting that no one has ever been able to hold a shadow, which, unfortunately for this foolish one, I indeed am. You, in an attempt to use me as a ransom tool, have, on the other hand, dug your own grave.]³ (9)

[Note—¹It is not deemed to be a good etiquette, it is not civil and polite in Indian culture for a married woman to talk to a male stranger directly, especially when her husband is not present. So therefore, Sita looked at a twig or a blade of grass in front of her, and used it as a medium to address Ravana. She appeared to talk with this inanimate twig or grass blade when replying to the demon king.

It also implies that she had not raised her head while replying, but kept her gaze fixed on the ground where the grass was.

There are two other reasons why Sita kept a twig or a blade of grass in front of her while replying to Ravana: One is that she wished to tell him that as far as she was concerned, Ravana was no better than that lifeless and useless piece lying at her feet on the ground, and soon his fate would also be like it as the fierce fire of the

impending war would reduce his entire clan to ashes as easily as a fire burns a dry twig or a blade of grass to ashes.

The other reason is very significant—it is well known that Sita was born of Mother Earth, as king Janak had found her in a pitcher while clearing the ground to perform a fire sacrifice. {Refer: Adhyatma Ramayan, Baal Kand, Canto 6, verse nos. 59-60.}

Grass is born from earth, and so Sita regarded ‘grass’ as her symbolic brother. Hence, she kept her ‘brother’, the blade of grass, between herself and her tormentor Ravana when talking with the latter, to ensure that her ‘brother’ would stand guard for her safety. Perhaps Ravana understood this subtle message as he did not venture either to use force on her or come even a wee bit nearer to Sita.

²The lotus flower opens its petals during the day when bright sunlight falls on it. It will of course not unfold by and other light, especially one as dim and flickering as that emitted by the fire-fly. Here, Sita compares the glory and magnificence of Ravana to the feeble and flickering light of the fire-fly, and Ravana himself to this insect. Since Sita uses the metaphor of the lotus flower, it follows that by implication she is referring to Lord Ram who is likened to the splendorous sun because the lotus flower opens its petals in sunlight. She says that Ravana is inconsequential and without any worth when compared to Lord Ram.

³Then she sternly warns him that enough was enough, and henceforth he must stop tormenting her. Is he not aware of the powers and potentials of Lord Ram’s arms? If he is a great and mighty warrior who claims to have conquered the heaven and the earth, then why does he not face Lord Ram directly in a duel and subjugate him instead of threatening a helpless and weary woman. Abducting a terrified and weeping woman who is alone at home is a cowardly and despicable act; what then he speaks so boastfully and loudly of his majesty and magnificence, what claim does he have of power and strength, for he is no better than a thief who dares not face the master of the house when he comes crouching through the back door during the darkness of the night, or a jackal or a hyena who steals the meal left over by a lion? Woe to Ravana; shame to him and his race! Why does he not bury himself in an avalanche of shame, dishonour, guilt, remorse and regret; why does the earth not open up in an abyss to devour such a mean and vile creature as he?

In this context, we can recollect a Psalm of the Holy Bible where what is said therein would reflect how Sita would have cursed Ravana who was tormenting her. Now, let us read this Psalm from The Holy Bible, Old Testament, Psalm 52/1-9:-

- 1: Why boastest thou thyself in mischief, O mighty man? the goodness of God endureth continually.
- 2: Thy tongue deviseth mischiefs; like a sharp razor, working deceitfully.
- 3: Thou lovest evil more than good; and lying rather than to speak righteousness.
- 4: Thou lovest all devouring words, O thou deceitful tongue.
- 5: God shall likewise destroy thee for ever, he shall take thee away, and pluck thee out of thy dwelling place, and root thee out of the land of the living.
- 6: The righteous also shall see, and fear, and shall laugh at him:
- 7: Lo, this is the man that made not God his strength; but trusted in the abundance of his riches, and strengthened himself in his wickedness.
- 8: But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for

ever and ever.

9: I will praise thee for ever, because thou hast done it: and I will wait on thy name; for it is good before thy saints.

It was truly such a stern rebuke for Ravana, especially in front of the women who had accompanied him, that he must have felt highly insulted and humiliated. He must have squirmed in anger and vowed his vengeance upon Sita, which surely he did as we read in the Doha no. 9 that follows herein below.]

दो०. आपुहि सुनि खद्योत सम रामहि भानु समान ।

परुष बचन सुनि काढ़ि असि बोला अति खिसिआन ॥ १ ॥

dōhā.

āpuhi suni khadyōta sama rāmahi bhānu samāna.

paruṣa bacana suni kāḍhi asi bōlā ati khisi'āna. 9.

Hearing himself being likened to the fire-fly, and by implication Lord Ram to the sun, and hearing Sita's stern words of rebuke, Ravana lost his cool and became furious. He felt extremely humiliated, and becoming exasperated and peeved, he drew his sword and said angrily --- (Doha no. 9)

चौ०. सीता तैं मम कृत अपमाना । कटिहउँ तव सिर कठिन कृपाना ॥ १ ॥

नाहिं त सपदि मानु मम बानी । सुमुखि होति न त जीवन हानी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sītā tair̥ mama kṛta apamānā. kaṭiha'um̐ tava sira kaṭhina kṛpānā. 1.

nāhir̥m ta sapadi mānu mama bānī. sumukhi hōti na ta jīvana hānī. 2.

Ravana was indignant and angry. He said vehemently, 'Sita, you have insulted and humiliated me (in front of the females who accompany me). [Now, this is too much for me to bear.] I shall cut-off your head with me infallible sword which strikes hard. (1)

Or you must soon agree to what I say. Otherwise, oh the sweet faced One (sumukhi)¹, your life would be in danger. [To wit, if you wish to preserve yourself, give consent to my proposal, for otherwise I shall slay you with this sword of mine.]' (2)

[Note—¹By using the term “sumukhi” for Sita, Ravana means that he would have surely killed her right at that moment for insulting him, as slighting a king in his own kingdom invites immediate punishment, especially when the king is directly abused by the offender, which amounts to a grave crime no less than sacrilege, but for the moment he spares her life just because he does not want to kill such a pretty woman.

This interpretation is endorsed in Valmiki's Ramayana, Sundar Kand, Canto 22, verse nos. 4-6.]

स्याम सरोज दाम सम सुंदर । प्रभु भुज करि कर सम दसकंधर ॥ ३ ॥
 सो भुज कंठ कि तव असि घोरा । सुनु सठ अस प्रवान पन मोरा ॥ ४ ॥
 चंद्रहास हरु मम परितापं । रघुपति बिरह अनल संजातं ॥ ५ ॥
 सीतल निसित बहसि बर धारा । कह सीता हरु मम दुख भारा ॥ ६ ॥

syāma sarōja dāma sama sundara. prabhu bhuja kari kara sama dasakandhara. 3.

sō bhuja kaṇṭha ki tava asi ghōrā. sunu saṭha asa pravāna pana mōrā. 4.
 candrahāsa haru mama paritāpaṁ. raghupati biraha anala saṁjātaṁ. 5.
 sītala nisita bahasi bara dhārā. kaha sītā haru mama dukha bhārā. 6.

[Sita replied—] ‘The arms of my dear Lord (Ram) are as lovely as a string of blue lotuses, and they are as shapely, long and muscular as the trunk of an elephant. Oh you ten-headed One (dasakandhara)¹! Listen; can your ugly arms ever be a match for the arms of the Lord? (3)

I make a solemn vow before you, oh wicked fool, that it is either those arms of the Lord (Sri Ram) or your sword that will have my neck.

[To wit, I will never surrender to you, I will never bow before you evil crook, and I will never become a prey of your pervert designs. Woe to you, oh fool. I would prefer death by your sword rather than submitting myself to a foul and mean monster like you.]’ (4)

[Then Sita turned to the gleaming sword of Ravana and addressed it as follows—] ‘Oh candrahāsa² (a curved sword that is shaped like a crescent moon)! Please remove the immense suffering and misery that I am being subjected to due to my separation from Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram). [To wit, strike me and kill me so that my sufferings and torments come to an instant end.]³ (5)

You look cool, you have an excellent sharp edge, and you look able to remove my sufferings.’

Sita said to this Sword (of Ravana), ‘Prithee of Sword, I earnestly request you to end my sufferings and torments forthwith as they are so immense and intense that I can’t cope with them any longer.’ (6)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted that the actual word used in the text for Ravana is “dasakandhara”, which literally means ‘ten shoulders’. [“dasa” = ten; “kandhara” = shoulder. This in practical terms means ‘ten heads’ because each shoulder of Ravana supported a neck and a head.

²The word “candrahāsa” literally means ‘that which laughs at the moon and puts it to shame because its shine and curve are better than that of the moon’. This sword of Ravana was very attractive as it had a gleaming surface which glittered in sunlight with a brilliance that was better than that of the disc of the moon; its edge was well curved, sharp and smooth, better than the rough and ragged edge of the crescent moon. This sword was like a war sickle or a scimitar.

Here, the Sword has been personified.

³Ravana has already threatened to kill Sita with this sword. So now Sita asks it to carry out its lord's orders, and she is ready to oblige it.]

सुनत बचन पुनि मारन धावा । मयतनयाँ कहि नीति बुझावा ॥ ७ ॥
 कहेसि सकल निसिचरिन्ह बोलाई । सीतहि बहु बिधि त्रासहु जाई ॥ ८ ॥
 मास दिवस महुँ कहा न माना । तौ मैं मारबि काढ़ि कृपाना ॥ ९ ॥

sunata bacana puni mārana dhāvā. mayatanayām̐ kahi nīti bujhāvā. 7.
 kahēsi sakala nīśicarinhā bōlāī. sītahi bahu bidhi trāsahu jāī. 8.
 māsa divasa mahum̐ kahā na mānā. tau maim̐ mārabi kāḍhi kṛpānā. 9.

When Ravana heard the words of Sita (that she is willing to die instead of yielding to his pervert overtures), he became excessively exasperated; he drew his sword and dashed forward to kill her¹.

[Sita had addressed the sword. So Ravana unsheathed it and got ready to strike it, as if saying, "Alright, as you wish. Here is your prayer answered. The Sword comes to embrace your neck!"]

At that moment, the daughter of the demon Maye, i.e. Mandodari, the wife of Ravana and the chief queen, stepped forward to stop him. She somehow pacified him with words of good counsel². (7)

Then Ravana summoned all the female demon guards³, and ordered them to go and subject Sita to a lot of torments. (8)

He declared, 'If she does not agree to what I say within a period of one month, then I shall surely kill her by striking her with this sword.'⁴ (9)

[Note—¹The fact that Ravana rushed or dashed forward towards Sita with a drawn sword proves that he was standing at a reasonable distance from her. He wished to maintain Sita's dignity and honour by not getting too close to her during the initial phase of conversation. As we have already noted earlier, though he acted in a most pervert and despicable way, threatening her to surrender herself to him, he internally respected her as he knew that she was the Mother of the world, and that she would become an instrument for his soul's redemption; the way he externally behaved, however, was for public consumption only.

²Mandodari advised her husband to cool down; things done in haste are never good. The world will laugh at him that he got provoked by a distressed woman's words; the world will scorn at him that he killed an unarmed woman. Besides this, if he had brought Sita with the intention that he would find deliverance when the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram kills his demonic body, then killing Sita would be counter-productive because then the chances are that Lord Ram may return back as no purpose would be served in fighting a bloody war when the objective of freeing Sita was already defeated.

So the best thing was to have patience, and give Sita some time to think and reconsider her position. Perhaps she may give her consent and Ravana's wishes may be fulfilled. But killing her in a fit of rage is totally uncalled for.

³During the conversation between Ravana and Sita, the demoness guards stood at a distance in deference to their king Ravana, and to maintain decorum and etiquette. So now he calls them near to issue his orders.

⁴This threat was a blessing in disguise for Sita, as it would insure that she would continue to focus her attention on Lord Ram and pray to the Almighty to arrange her meeting with the Lord. When a person is certain of death, he or she loses all interests in this world, and remains focused on the Lord God, praying for the soul's deliverance, redemption, emancipation and salvation. To wit, this period of one month would give Sita time to do Tapa (austerity and penance) for her purification; it will be the time when she could do Yoga (meditation) and Dhyān (contemplation).]

दो०. भवन गयउ दसकंधर इहाँ पिसाचिनि बृंद ।
सीतहि त्रास देखावहिं धरहिं रूप बहु मंद ॥ १० ॥

dōhā.

bhavana gaya'u dasakandhara ihām' pisācini bṛnda.
sītahi trāsa dēkhāvahiṁ dharahiṁ rūpa bahu manda. 10.

After giving his instructions to the female demon guards (as mentioned in the previous verses), the ten-headed One (Ravana) went back to his palace.

Meanwhile, these fiendish and cruel demonesses (pisācini bṛnda) showed all eagerness and diligence to carry out the orders of their lord by terrifying Sita with the use of harsh threatening words, and assuming all sorts of fearful forms¹. (Doha no. 10)

[Note—¹The word used in the text for these female demon guards deputed to exert pressure on Sita is “pisācini”. It implies that they were cruel, fiendish and wicked to extreme, for they derived great sadistic pleasure in torturing others, at least mentally if not physically. It is to be carefully noted here that no one actually harmed Sita physically; all the torments to which she was subjected were limited either to verbal abuses, threats, intimidations and insinuations or to creating fear in her mind by menacing sights of terrifying forms and horrifying gestures that would send a person cowering for cover, trembling all over and gasping for breath.

But Sita remained calm and unruffled in the face of these provocations. She knew that Ravana has just given her a month's time (Chaupai line no. 9 herein above), and so no harm would come to her within that period. So therefore she still has time to 'hope', for 'hope is life', and 'giving up hope is death'.

One month is not a short period, and ample chances were there that if she 'maintained her faith and continued to hope', i.e. she lived during this testing time, then Lord Ram would come to her rescue and free her. With this conviction Sita decided that she would not oblige these wicked demonesses by responding to them and giving them a chance to have a nice pastime at her expense. The best way to torment her tormentors was to neglect them completely and remain fearless, as this would frustrate them and make them tear out their hairs madly in anger and disgust. The effect would be that instead of making Sita suffer they themselves would suffer horribly at their failure; and the more they failed and threw greater tantrums the more

it would give Sita a chance to have a nice pastime seeing their paroxysms of hilarious behaviour that comes with one losing one's senses, or as if they have been suddenly afflicted by chorea wherein they are performing Saint Vitus' dance.

To wit, Sita's confidence, self-restraint, reserve, patience and faith due to which she completely neglected these fiends created a piquant scenario where it was she who enjoyed the mad dance of these rascals rather than giving them an opportunity to derive any pleasure by seeing Sita terrified and weeping for mercy!]

चौ०. त्रिजटा नाम राच्छसी एका । राम चरन रति निपुन बिबेका ॥ १ ॥

सबन्हौ बोलि सुनाएसि सपना । सीतहि सेइ करहु हित अपना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

trijatā nāma rācchasī ēkā. rāma carana rati nipuna bibēkā.1.

sabanhau bōli sunā'ēsī sapanā. sītahi sē'i karahu hita apanā. 2.

Amongst the demoness guards was one old lady named Trijata. She had deep affection for Lord Ram's holy feet (as she was a pious soul with a spiritual bearing), and was very wise and prudent¹. (1)

She called all her companions (the female demon guards) together, and sharing with them a wondrous and fearful dream that she had dreamt, she warned them about its implications as follows, 'Ensure your good and welfare by serving Sita (because if you don't listen to my advice and continue to make her suffer, than mind you, all of you would be doomed; I'll tell you just now why it would be so; listen carefully). (2)

[Note—¹Trijata was probably the demoness in charge of the detachment of guards deputed to keep a watch on Sita. Trijata was the senior most amongst them. It ought to be noted here that only female demons (demonesses) were put on guard duty for Sita; male demons were not allowed in her vicinity.

By appointing Trijata to guard Sita, Ravana wished to make it sure that beyond a limit Sita was not subjected to too harsh a treatment at the hands of other demonesses. Trijata was Sita's constant companion and soul mate during her confinement in Lanka; in due course of time she became Sita's best friend and confidante in whom she used to confide her thoughts and emotions. Trijata helped Sita by comforting her from time to time; she used to keep her hopes high, and at times when Sita was in troughs of depression and overcome by dejection Trijata would cheer her up and motivate her to keep up her faith and keep hoping because she would surely find redemption soon. This was Trijata's singular contribution towards fulfilling the divine mission of the Supreme Being inasmuch as she shielded Sita from any physical harm from any of the cruel demonesses who surrounded her at all times, and give moral support and companionship to Sita in times of despair and desolation.

As we shall read below, she wisely managed to send all the demonesses away from the spot, leaving Sita alone and freed from further harassment; otherwise these fiendish female demon guards would have continued to tease and torture Sita endlessly.]

सपनें बानर लंका जारी । जातुधान सेना सब मारी ॥ ३ ॥

खर आरूढ़ नगन दससीसा । मुंडित सिर खंडित भुज बीसा ॥ ४ ॥
एहि बिधि सो दच्छिन दिसि जाई । लंका मनहुँ बिभीषन पाई ॥ ५ ॥

sapanēm bānara laṅkā jārī. jātudhāna sēnā saba mārī. 3.
khara ārūrha nagana dasasīsā. muṇḍita sira khaṇḍita bhuja bīsā. 4.
ēhi bidhi sō dacchina disi jāī. laṅkā manahum̐ bibhīṣana pāī. 5.

In that dream a monkey (bānara) had burnt the whole of Lanka, and had killed the entire demon army (or at least the major part of it). (3)

I also saw that the ten-headed Ravana was naked and riding a donkey; he had his head tonsured and all his twenty arms were severed¹. (4)

In this way he was proceeding towards the south direction (indicative of going to hell, the nether or the lower world), and Vibhishan had got the kingdom of Lanka (i.e. he was crowned as its king)². (5)

[Note—¹Riding a donkey with his head shaved indicated that Ravana had been completely defeated by a powerful adversary who had paraded him naked on a donkey in the city to signal his former subjects that he had been vanquished.

His twenty arms were chopped off as a cruel punishment inflicted upon him in the war.

²Then, he was banished from Lanka and sent to exile as a prisoner of war to some remote island south of the city. It also might mean that he was being chased out of the city to go to hell. After that, his brother Vibhishan was crowned the king of Lanka.

It is believed that Yam, the god of death and guardian of hell, lives in the south. So therefore, 'going in the south direction' means two things—one is death, and the other is hell.]

नगर फिरी रघुबीर दोहाई । तब प्रभु सीता बोलि पठाई ॥ ६ ॥
यह सपना मैं कहउँ पुकारी । होइहि सत्य गएँ दिन चारी ॥ ७ ॥
तासु बचन सुनि ते सब डरीं । जनकसुता के चरनहि परीं ॥ ८ ॥

nagara phirī raghubīra dōhāī. taba prabhu sītā bōli paṭhāī. 6.
yaha sapanā maim̐ kaha'um̐ pukārī. hō'ihi satya ga'em̐ dina cārī. 7.
tāsu bacana suni tē saba ḍarīm̐. janakasutā kē carananhi parīm̐. 8.

The victory of Lord Ram was proclaimed throughout the city (of Lanka) by beating of the drum. Then the Lord summoned Sita and ordered that she be brought to him. (6)

I can affirm without hesitation that this dream would become true before four days have passed (i.e. in a very short period of time)¹. (7)

When the demonesses heard of this terrifying dream, they were all scared out of their wits, and all of them fell down at the feet of Sita (begging her to forgive them and spare them punishment and death)². (8)

[Note—¹The phrase ‘within four days’ is simply a figure of speech in colloquial language to mean ‘a very short time’. So Trijata meant that whatever she has said would happen shortly.

²When the demonesses heard this prophesy of doomsday, they became sore affright for their own safety. Thanks to Trijata’s wisdom and contrivance, there was immediate relief for Sita as the demonesses, who had been creating nuisance for her, themselves became terrified, and they stopped tormenting her from that instant. Not only that, they pleaded with Sita to show mercy on them and spare them punishment. Realizing that Ravana’s future was in doldrums, these selfish demonesses had no regrets in disobeying his commands; they determined that their own good lay in keeping Sita in good humour rather than trying to please Ravana who is to die soon.

This is an important signal—that the demons obeyed and fought for Ravana as they thought he was invincible and had supreme power. The demons were extremely selfish creatures, and were more interested in enjoying the pleasures of life and the spoils of various wars that came to them easily due to Ravana who won on the strength of boons granted to him by the creator Brahma than owing any serious allegiance and loyalty to him *par se*.

During our reading of this Story, when we will read about the Burning of Lanka by Hanuman, and later on during the course of the War itself, as narrated in Kavita-wali Ramayan, we shall see how the citizens of Lanka curse Ravana for his stupidity that had brought ruin to the city and caused so much suffering to its inhabitants.

Presently however, when these demonesses returned home they surely must have confided with their partners about what Trijata had told them. But probably it had no or little effect on the male demons as they were too egoist, arrogant and haughty to believe in their defeat and Ravana’s subjugation merely on the basis of some wild dream conjured up by an old and stupid demoness whom they thought was perchance out of her head.]

दो०. जहँ तहँ गई सकल तब सीता कर मन सोच ।

मास दिवस बीतें मोहि मारिहि निसिचर पोच ॥ ११ ॥

dōhā.

jaham̐ taham̐ ga’īm sakala taba sītā kara mana sōca.
māsa divasa bītēm mōhi mārihi nisicara pōca. 11.

After that, when all the demoness guards dispersed and went away in different directions, Sita found herself alone and began to brood¹.

When one month will be over, the lowly demon would kill me. (Doha no. 11)

[Note—¹Till the time the demonesses were around, they were creating so much noise and nuisance that Sita had no time to think of anything; she was very disturbed. But when these wicked creatures went away, there was silence and peace around her. It

was then that Sita got some time to brood and think of her misfortunes once again. She once again sank in despair and despondency, worrying what would happen to her after the expiry of one month.]

चौ०. त्रिजटा सन बोलीं कर जोरी । मातु बिपति संगिनि तैं मोरी ॥ १ ॥
 तजौं देह करु बेगि उपाई । दुसह बिरहु अब नहिं सहि जाई ॥ २ ॥
 आनि काठ रचु चिता बनाई । मातु अनल पुनि देहि लगाई ॥ ३ ॥
 सत्य करहि मम प्रीति सयानी । सुनै को श्रवन सूल सम बानी ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

trijaṭā sana bōlīm kara jōrī. mātu bipati saṅgini taim mōrī. 1.
 tajaum dēha karu bēgi upāī. dusaha birahu aba nahim sahi jāī. 2.
 āni kāṭha racu citā banāī. mātu anala puni dēhi lagāī. 3.
 satya karahi mama prīti sayānī. sunai kō śravana sūla sama bānī. 4.

[Sita felt that Trijata had been a god-sent angel for her in times of misery and gloom, for it was she who had wittily sent the demonesses, who had been tormenting her, away. Sita also realized that Trijata was favourably disposed to her and had devotion for Lord Ram, so therefore Trijata was sincere in her manners. Hence, it was a natural instinct on Sita's part to treat Trijata as her closest friend and companion who was no less than a 'mother' for her in such horrifying times; she felt that in the vicious environment where her fate seemed to have doomed her, and in which her misfortunes had cast her, it was Trijata alone who would, if she could, become her saviour. So therefore Sita called Trijata her 'mother' as she was very caring and loving; Trijata felt empathy for Sita, she sympathized with Sita, and from all signs she would maneuver things in Sita's favour and accord her protection as much as she could.]

Sita pleaded with Trijata with clasped hands (in supplication, to stress upon Trijata her abject despair and the urgency of her entreaty), 'Mother, verily indeed you are my only friend and companion during my days of agony, misery, grief and despair. (1)

So please make some arrangement or contrive some method by which I can discard my body and end my life to get over its miserable existence, for truly I tell you honestly that the agony of separation (from my beloved Lord) has become unbearable for me, and its attendant misery and grief have tormented me so much that they have completely overwhelmed me. (2)

Bring some firewood and make a pyre for me. Then, oh mother, set fire to it. (3)

Oh the wise one with a tender heart! Put to practice your affection for me (by helping me to end my miseries, and find peace). Say, how can I, or for that matter anyone else, cope with the harsh words my ears are being bombarded with (for they appear to be like hot molten oil that is being poured into my ears)¹?

[To wit, if I live for one month, I would be subjected to daily abuse and threats said so menacingly and loudly that my ears would burst. It would be far better for me to put an end to this torture by dying. So please help me as I feel you love me like a mother loves her daughter. Say, will a mother like that her daughter be

subjected to interminable horrifying torments by fiends and blood-thirsty vicious rascals, who know no mercy worth the name, right before her eyes? So if you truly love me and have sympathy for me then please bring an end to my sufferings.]’ (4)

[Note—¹Sita is alluding to what Ravana had said to her and the way he behaved with her in Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 9, and Chaupai line nos. 1-2, 7-9 that precede Doha no. 10.

Then Sita alludes to the behaviour of the female demon guards who were instructed by Ravana to torment her as mentioned in Doha no. 10.

She therefore pleads with Trijata to bring all this to an end if she actually loved her and empathized with her by helping her to die.

We will remember what observations have been made in the note appended to Doha no. 8 herein above—that Sita decided to wait for Lord Ram to come, that she decided to have faith and hope. So in that context her present pleading to end her life seems contradictory. No, not really. As we have also observed that both Lord Ram and Ravana had been careful to play their respective parts to perfection—Lord Ram as a human being whose wife has been stolen and who goes out to search for her, and Ravana as the fierce demon who enjoys stealing other people’s woman folk and shows no mercy to anyone—Sita too decided that she would play her role to perfection.

To wit, though internally she had made a firm resolve to wait patiently with hope and faith for one month to give Lord Ram time to come and eliminate the demons, and to turn a deaf ear to her tormentors’ words as she was sure no actual harm will come to her from any demon as their lord Ravana has granted her a grace period of one full month, yet externally she pretended that to live for one more day was an impossible thing for her.

There was another reason why Sita asked Trijata for this favour; she wanted to test Trijata’s honesty and integrity. Was Trijata playing any tricks with her on the behest of Ravana? Sita was absolutely certain that Trijata will not oblige her as she also knew that Ravana had granted immunity from death to Sita for one month. So if Sita died under the watch of Trijata, and after her death burnt firewood was discovered, Trijata would suffer an agonizing torture and death like no one had ever thought of. No, Trijata would not like to suffer horrible torture for herself; no one would. So surely Trijata will not burn Sita to death; it was a foregone conclusion that Sita knew.

With this prayer, to let her die by burning herself, Sita was able to enhance Trijata’s personal empathy and sympathy for her; it also would ensure that Trijata would keep close company of Sita and not let her alone for long for the fear that she may harm herself. If that happens, Trijata would have no answer to give to Ravana, and this very thought would keep Trijata alert. This vigilance in turn would ensure that no other unscrupulous demon or demoness would come in secretly to kill her or gravely wound her.]

सुनत बचन पद गहि समुझाएसि । प्रभु प्रताप बल सुजसु सुनाएसि ॥ ५ ॥

निसि न अनल मिल सुनु सुकुमारी । अस कहि सो निज भवन सिधारी ॥ ६ ॥

sunata bacana pada gahi samujhā'ēsi. prabhu pratāpa bala sujasu sunā'ēsi. 5.
nisi na anala mila sunu sukumārī. asa kahi sō nija bhavana sidhārī. 6.

Hearing the agonized plea of Sita, Trijata fell down and clasped Sita's feet, consoling her by reminding her of Lord Ram's glory, valour, strength and fame. (5)

She told Sita, 'Listen oh tender lady (sukumārī)! Fire cannot be found here during the night¹.' Saying this, Trijata went home. (6)

[Note—¹Trijata wanted to find an excuse, so she said that it is not possible to either find firewood at such a short notice or some source from which fire can be lighted at that hour because it was still dark. This clearly implies that it was still dark and night had not yet fully ended. Obviously it was pre-dawn time, a few hours perhaps before the first rays of sunlight lights up the horizon. This time is called 'Brahma-muhurtha', and it is roughly between 4-5 a.m.

It was the time of the onset of winter when the sunrise is late; it would be dark till say 6 a.m. How do we know that it was early winter? We have read earlier that Lord Ram had spent the four months of the rainy season on Mt. Pravarshan. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 12; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 18.}

Then some time surely must have passed while spies, heralds and messengers were assembled; then more than one month passed while Hanuman's group had been searching Sita in vain {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 22; and Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 26.}.

To wit, one can make a rough guess that approximately two more months may have passed after the rainy season when we are reading of the events concerning Hanuman's meeting with at Lanka. This means winter was close by, and it was the time of the year when days begin to get shorter and nights longer. So while the day-break may be earlier during the summer season, but at the time of which we are talking about the first light of the sun may not be perceivable by, say, 6 a.m. Hence, during the moments of Trijata's conversation with Sita it was surely dark in the sky.

It ought to be noted that Trijata hastily left that place for home. She feared that if she tarried there any longer, Sita would make another absurd request which she would not be able to fulfill, and may be then Sita would start wailing aloud and also scream, for being overcome with misery and grief she seemed to have become desperate and crazy. Should it happen, it would be a catastrophe; all the guards would wake up and find Trijata alone with Sita, as all other demonesses have gone away. This would mean immediate scaffold and death by beheading for both Sita and her friend Trijata.]

कह सीता बिधि भा प्रतिकूला । मिलिहि न पावक मिटिहि न सूला ॥ ७ ॥

देखिअत प्रगट गगन अंगारा । अवनि न आवत एकउ तारा ॥ ८ ॥

पावकमय ससि स्रवत न आगी । मानहुँ मोहि जानि हत भागी ॥ ९ ॥

kaha sītā bidhi bhā pratikūlā. milihi na pāvaka miṭihi na sūlā. 7.

dēkhi'ata pragaṭa gagana aṅgārā. avani na āvata ēka'u tārā. 8.

pāvakamaya sasi sravata na āgī. mānahum' mōhi jāni hata bhāgī. 9.

[Sita was feeling very miserable and forlorn as her only companion Trijata too had gone away, leaving her grieving and lamenting on her fate alone. So she began muttering to herself woefully.]

Sita said to herself, 'It appears that the Creator has become opposed to me, for I will not get fire, and without fire my horrifying agonies and interminable torments won't end. (7)

In the sky one can behold many flying sparks (a reference to comets that flew by or fire-flies that were seen everywhere overhead in the garden), but not a single shooting star (flying spark) can be found on the surface of the earth. [To wit, these sparks are flying here and there everywhere over my head, but why don't even one of them land on the ground so I can rush forward to burn myself by its fiery embrace?] (8)

Even the moon seems to be burning hot for me, but woe to me that even it does not shed one single ember of fire because it thinks me unlucky and unworthy of this grace. [To wit, the moonlight has spread all around me, but why is it not hot enough to burn me?]¹ (9)

[Note—¹The moon and its light are cool and soothing, but for someone who is under intense emotional stress the sight of the moon and its soothing cool light is unbearable. It appears that the moon is teasing Sita, the sufferer, instead of acting as a cool balm for her ruffled nerves and tormented being.

In these verses, the poet Tulsidas has described the state of the mind of those who are suffering from grief of separation from their beloved ones.]

सुनहि बिनय मम बिटप असोका । सत्य नाम करु हरु मम सोका ॥ १० ॥
नूतन किसलय अनल समाना । देहि अग्नि जनि करहि निदाना ॥ ११ ॥
देखि परम बिरहाकुल सीता । सो छन कपिहि कलप सम बीता ॥ १२ ॥

sunahi binaya mama biṭapa asōkā. satya nāma karu haru mama sōkā. 10.
nūtana kisalaya anala samānā. dēhi agini jani karahi nidānā. 11.
dēkhi parama birahākula sītā. sō chana kapihi kalapa sama bītā. 12.

[Then Sita prayed to the Tree under whose shade she was sitting.]

Oh Ashoka Tree! Be true to your name and uphold the sanctity of it by removing my sorrow, grief and misery. [To wit, you are called 'Ashok', i.e. one who removes sorrow, grief and misery. So please live up to your reputation and prove that your name 'Ashok' is apt by freeing me from the horrors I am being subjected to.] (10)

The fresh leaves and branches that have sprouted on your body, they are like hot firewood I so long to have. Why don't you shed some so that I can end my body with them? [I long to die by burning myself using these leaves and branches that fall from your stem. So please be graceful and shed some of your weight by letting some leaves and branches fall to the ground.] (11)

The Kapi (Hanuman), who was watching the events from his hiding post in the foliage of the tree, felt very sad and distraught when he saw and heard such lamentations and woeful grieving of Sita who was overcome with grief and immensely distressed due to her separation from Lord Ram.

Forsooth, each of these moments that Hanuman witnessed Sita suffering and lamenting seemed to be like ages for him¹. (12)

[Note—¹The idea is that time seems to fly when one is extremely happy, for one wishes to have more and more of this happiness even as the time seems to be too short for him. On the contrary, sadness and grief seems to stretch the same time eternally, because the sufferer thinks his suffering never seems to come to an end.

Therefore, the time Hanuman spent watching the sufferings of Sita seemed to be like an endless period of time to him, and he only wished that this time would come to an end.]

सो०. कपि करि हृदयँ बिचार दीन्ह मुद्रिका डारि तब ।

जनु असोक अंगार दीन्ह हरषि उठि कर गहेउ ॥ १२ ॥

sōraṭhā.

kapi kari hṛdayam^ṁ bicāra dīnhi mudrikā ḍāri taba.

janu asōka aṅgāra dīnha haraṣi uṭhi kara gahē'u. 12.

Unable to cope with his emotional stress any longer, and hearing that Sita was praying for something to fall from overhead to the ground, Hanuman decided in his heart that it was the opportune time¹, and he then dropped the ring (of Lord Ram that he had brought with him).

When Sita saw the glittering ring fall to the ground in front, she thought that the Ashok tree has answered her prayers; so she rushed forward and gladly picked it up. (Doha no. 12)

[Note—¹Hanuman observed that Sita was very watchful at that moment for anything that fell to the ground. He thought it to be the right moment to drop the ring as it was sure noticed by Sita. Had it been another time there were chances that Sita would not have taken notice for anything falling on the ground, for it was a garden, and dry leaves and twigs, ripe fruits and flowers used to fall from trees to the ground as a routine matter. But this moment was not routine; it was the time when Sita longed to see any thing falling from above her on to the ground before her. So it was certain that the falling of the ring would be noticed by her. And so it indeed was as we shall read in the verses that follow herein below.

Another obvious reason why Hanuman thought that it was the best time to introduce himself to Sita was that it was what is known as the 'grave-yard shift for guards', the time of the night when a person is usually too sleepy to be alert enough to perceive some covert hush-hush conversation taking place in some dark corner of a huge park under the shadow of a large tree such as the one where Sita sat. The cock had yet not crowed, Trijata had gone home, all other demoness guards had already gone away prior to her departure, and since it was yet dark and all the demons were either fast asleep or just rising from their slumber, which meant they would only be half awake and trying to rub-off sleep from their eyes, the deck was clear for

Hanuman. If he waited more there were chances that the time for the change of guards may arrive, and the next batch of demons may be more vigilant than their previous comrades who were slack in their duty so as to let Hanuman sneak in; or may be Ravana himself would come again after some second thought and change of mind.

In a short time the first rays of the sunlight would remove the cover of darkness which had proved to be a boon for Hanuman, and if he loses these precious moments in procrastination and demurring then probably he won't get another chance at all. So he decided to act quickly and dropped the ring that Lord Ram had given him as a token to establish his identity.]

चौ०. तब देखी मुद्रिका मनोहर । राम नाम अंकित अति सुंदर ॥ १ ॥
चकित चितव मुदरी पहिचानी । हरष बिषाद हृदयँ अकुलानी ॥ २ ॥
जीति को सकइ अजय रघुराई । माया तें असि रचि नहिं जाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

taba dēkhī mudrikā manōhara. rāma nāma aṅkita ati sundara. 1.
cakita citava mudarī pahicānī. haraṣa biṣāda hṛdayam' akulānī. 2.
jīti kō saka'i ajaya raghurā'ī. māyā tēm asi raci nahim jā'ī. 3.

When Hanuman dropped the finger-ring of Lord Ram that he had brought with him, Sita's attention was immediately drawn to it. She dashed forward and picked it up¹. When she held it in her hands and beheld a magnificent ring, she was shocked with astonishment as it had Lord Ram's name engraved in it in beautifully carved letters. (1)

As soon as she recognized the ring (as the one that exclusively belonged to her beloved Lord Ram, and since his name was engraved in it in a special manner that cannot be duplicated by anyone, for no one had the requisite skill to craft a similar ring, so there was no doubt it was the Lord's), she was immediately overcome by the contradictory emotions of excess of happiness, cheer and elation on the one hand, and grief, desperation and worry on the other hand which simultaneously buffeted her like two huge waves, causing immense consternation and great agitation in her heart. [Why was she thus agitated? It is answered herein below.] (2)

She was completely confounded and unable to understand the meaning of finding this unique ring. Dazed and astonished, she brooded, 'How amazing! Who can ever vanquish Lord Ram who is invincible and almighty? But at the same time a duplicate ring like his cannot be made by employing any skill or trick whatsoever. [So what does this mean? I am sore alarmed.]²' (3)

[Note: ¹As soon as Sita perceived that something had landed from above her head onto the ground before her, she dashed to pick it up. She thought that at last her prayers have been answered and some hot shining thing has fallen to the ground; now she would pick it up in hands and get burnt. But low and behold, she was for a stunning surprise that she could not even dream in her dreams, for what she held in her hands was not some fiery thing but a magnificent ring of exceptional beauty.

Sita was Dumb with amazement and awe by the unexpected sight of this magnificent ring which she recognized instantly, for it was a ring she was well

acquainted with; it was not any ordinary ring but the one that exclusively belonged to Lord Ram.

Why, she wondered in stunned astonishment, is she dreaming or is she awake? What is this that she sees? Is it a mirage, is she hallucinating under stress and delusions, or is it a real miracle? How come this ring of Lord Ram has landed before her in the far away land of demons, which lay across the ocean, far-far away from land from where she was abducted? Who has brought it? Is it some wild dream; is it some nasty trick of the demons? Many such thoughts rushed wildly through her mind during those few moments.

The reader is reminded that a detailed note regarding this “ring” has already been appended to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 23 of Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand in our Book when we were reading about the time when Lord Ram had summoned Hanuman and gave this ‘ring’ to him prior to the departure of the messengers in search of Sita.

²Sita was totally confounded at the sight of Lord Ram’s exclusive ring. It cannot be duplicated, so does it mean that the demons have been able to subjugate him and Ravana had snatched his ring, and then he has played this nasty trick upon her to prove that Lord Ram will no more come to rescue her? But this is an impossible thing, as Lord Ram is un-conquerable; no power in the world can ever defeat the Lord. So what do these contradictory things mean?

The sight of Lord Ram’s ring made Sita immediately jump up with exhilaration and cheer in her heart as now it was certain that the Lord has become aware of her location and has sent someone with this token to indicate to her that he was coming soon. But in the next moment she was overcome with doubts, and grief overtook her, when she thought of other possibilities: is it possible that her captors had managed to subdue the Lord and snatched his ring to prove to her that the Lord was vanquished, and she has no chance of escape, which would imply that if she wished for her good then she must obey Ravana. This notion hit her like a hammer, and no sooner had she smiled with joy than she was sucked in a vortex of grief and misery once again that numbed her senses.

Sita stood motionless in a state of shock; she was paralysed and dumbfounded.]

सीता मन बिचार कर नाना । मधुर बचन बोलेउ हनुमाना ॥ ४ ॥

रामचंद्र गुन बरनै लागा । सुनतहिं सीता कर दुख भागा ॥ ५ ॥

लागीं सुनै श्रवन मन लाई । आदिहु तें सब कथा सुनाई ॥ ६ ॥

sītā mana bicāra kara nānā. madhura bacana bōlē'u hanumānā. 4.

rāmacandra guna baranaiṁ lāgā. sunatahiṁ sītā kara dukha bhāgā. 5.

lāgiṁ sunaiṁ śravana mana lāī. ādihu tēṁ saba kathā sunāī. 6.

In this way, contradictory thoughts eliciting elation and depression one after another flooded Sita as she stood motionless and stunned¹. At that moment, Hanuman began speaking some soft and sweet words of consolation from his concealed place behind the cover of foliage of the tree. [What was Hanuman saying? It is answered in the following verse.] (4)

He began reciting the glories of Lord Ramchandra and the legend of his virtues. When Sita heard them, all her sorrows and grief were chased away. [To wit, when Sita heard Lord Ram's glories and virtues being recited in a sweet voice, she was smoothened in her mind and heart; the pleasant words of Hanuman acted as a balm over her frayed nerves to calm her down.]² (5)

She became engrossed in listening to them; she listened to the narration attentively, with her mind, heart and ears fixed on the recitation of Lord Ram's divine story from the beginning³. (6)

[Note—¹What thoughts passed across her mind? Refer to Chaupai line no. 3 and the note appended to Chaupai no. 1 herein above.

²To wit, herein lies a great spiritual secret, a formula that can be used by one and all during testing times in life to find solace and succour from abject misery: so therefore, if one is overburdened with grief that seem to crush him under its weight, when dark clouds of doom and despair loom menacingly on the horizon ready to flood and drown everything, when all seems lost and even hope appears to be far-cry that makes its object too elusive to be ever attainable, when the sun sets and the fear of the ghosts of the night begin to roost—at that time, during those moments of complete gloom and utter bitterness, remembering Lord Ram's holy name, recalling the Lord's merciful nature, invoking his benevolence, grace and kindness towards his devotees, would act as a soothing balm and rejuvenates a sinking spirit, for in all sooth and without gainsay, hearing of the Lord's glories and virtues act as a buoy for the sinking creature, and his soul immediately finds peace and beatitude.

³Hanuman narrated in brief the whole story of Lord Ram, particularly the events directly concerning Sita, like her marriage, the forest exile, the days Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman passed during their journey through the wilds, the events at Panchavati from where she was abducted, Lord Ram's efforts to search for her, and his meeting Jatau and Sabari, and then the Lord's onwards journey to Kishikindha where he met and befriended Sugriv, and then finally sending him with the ring to meet Sita.

As soon as Hanuman began to narrate Lord Ram's story, Sita became attentive; she noticed that the narrative was very exact and truthful, and therefore she was convinced that the narrator was surely close to the Lord. As a result, hope once again re-ignited in her heart, and she became eager to meet the person whose voice she heard.]

श्रवनामृत जेहिं कथा सुहाई । कही सो प्रगट होति किन भाई ॥ ७ ॥

तब हनुमंत निकट चलि गयऊ । फिरि बैठीं मन बिसमय भयऊ ॥ ८ ॥

śravanāmṛta jēhīm kathā suhā'ī. kahī sō pragaṭa hōti kina bhā'ī. 7.

taba hanumanta nikaṭa cali gaya'ū. phiri baiṭhīm mana bisamaya bhaya'ū. 8.

Sita said earnestly, 'He who has been narrating this legendary divine story of Lord Ram's grace and mercy, which is like a nectar for the ear (and which has provided me unbound succour and solace), why doesn't that person make himself visible; why does he remain hidden instead of revealing himself?' (7)

At this request, Hanuman came down from his perch on the tree, and went near her. But as soon as Sita saw him she once again became uncertain of the truth, and so she turned her back to Hanuman and looked the other way¹. (8)

[Note—¹Hanuman's form perhaps petrified Sita with fear. It is like the case of someone already scared stiff mentally, on emotional and psychological edge, and completely out of his wits, fearing physical harm from an enemy at every passing moment, suddenly seeing an unexpected sight, such as a squirrel or a mouse or a mongoose standing in front—surely that person would get the shock of his life for he is not prepared for it.

This is what happened with Sita; when she saw Hanuman for the first time she was so shocked and flabbergasted with disbelief that she thought for a moment that this was not Lord Ram's messenger as she had thought him to be, but some horrifying creature sent by Ravana to tease and torture her after she had refused his immoral offers.]

राम दूत मैं मातु जानकी । सत्य सपथ करुनानिधान की ॥ ९ ॥
 यह मुद्रिका मातु मैं आनी । दीन्हि राम तुम्ह कहँ सहिदानी ॥ १० ॥
 नर बानरहि संग कहु कैसें । कही कथा भइ संगति जैसें ॥ ११ ॥

rāma dūta mairṁ mātu jānakī. satya sapatha karunānidhāna kī. 9.
 yaha mudrikā mātu mairṁ ānī. dīnhi rāma tumha kham' sahidānī. 10.
 nara bānarahi saṅga kahu kaisērṁ. kahī kathā bha'i saṅgati jaisērṁ. 11.

Hanuman realized what was going on in Sita's mind, so he was quick to introduce himself when he said, 'Mother Sita, I am a messenger of Lord Ram. I say this to you under oath by invoking Lord Ram that it is the Truth (and I am not lying to you). (9)

Mother, I have brought this finger-ring which Lord Ram gave me to give you as a token for my identification.¹ (10)

Then Sita asked Hanuman, 'Say, tell me how it happened that a human being and monkeys came in contact with each other and became friends?'

So Hanuman narrated to her all the events that led to establishment of friendship between Lord Ram (representing the 'human being') and Sugriv (representing the 'monkey race')². (11)

[Note—¹Refer to Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 23 where we have read about Lord Ram giving this ring to Hanuman.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 5.

Sita heard this narrative very attentively. She was particularly amazed when she heard how Lord Ram and Sugriv became friends, though she was convinced the line of narrative was truthful as she had herself witnessed Jatau's valiant effort to free

her and his ultimate sacrifice when his wings were cut by Ravana, and how she had seen the monkeys on the top of a hill when she had dropped her clothes from the air. These events have been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-25 that precede Doha no. 29.

But inspite of all this, Sita wished to be certain that this was not some kind of trick to trap her. So she thought it fit to enquire deeply as to how Lord Ram and Sugriv became friends, for this would help her to descry some loophole, if there were any.]

दो०. कपि के बचन सप्रेम सुनि उपजा मन बिस्वास ।

जाना मन क्रम बचन यह कृपासिंधु कर दास ॥ १३ ॥

dōhā.

kapi kē bacana saprēma suni upajā mana bisvāsa.

jānā mana krama bacana yaha kṛpāsindhu kara dāsa. 13.

Affectionately hearing the sweets words of the Kapi (i.e. hearing the answer which Hanuman gave her in response to her query), Sita realised and was convinced in her heart and mind that he indeed was a devoted and sincere servant of the Lord (Ram) who is an ocean of mercy, kindness, grace and benevolence, a servant who is truly committed to serving his Lord by his heart and mind (i.e. at the emotion level as well as the intellectual level), by his actions and deeds (i.e. in whatever he does), and by his words (i.e. in whatever he says). (Doha no. 13)

चौ०. हरिजन जानि प्रीति अति गाढ़ी । सजल नयन पुलकावलि बाढ़ी ॥ १ ॥

बूझत बिरह जलधि हनुमाना । भयहु तात मो कहूँ जलजाना ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

harijana jāni prīti ati gāṛhī. sajala nayana pulakāvali bāṛhī. 1.

būṛata biraha jaladhi hanumānā. bhayahu tāta mō kahūṁ jalajānā. 2.

Realising that Hanuman was truly a devotee and follower of Lord Hari (“harijana”; Lord Ram’s devotee), Sita developed an intense sense of love and affection for him. She became highly sentimental and so overwhelmed with emotion that tears welled up in her eyes, the body became thrilled, and she had goose-bumps all over. (1)

[After a moment she gathered her wits together and said to Hanuman), ‘My dear son Hanuman (hanumānā, tāta)¹! For me, who was desolate and desparate, almost drowning in the vast ocean of grief, sorrow and misery (that separation from my beloved Lord Ram has brought to me), you, I verily indeed declare, proved to be the proverbial ship that comes providentially to the rescue of a drowning person.

[To wit, had you not come in time then very soon I would have died due to the weight of the burden of grief, sorrow and pain that has overwhelmed me.] (2)

[Note—¹How did Sita know that the messenger's name was 'Hanuman'? Well, we have just read that Hanuman narrated the story of Lord Ram and all the events related to her in brief, ending with him bringing the ring given to him by Lord Ram as a token of identification when he met Sita. Obviously he must have also mentioned his own name during the narration. This is how Sita came to learn that he was called Hanuman.

And since he was a faithful and committed devotee and follower of Lord Ram, who is doing his best to serve the Lord, Sita treated him affectionately as her son (tāta).]

अब कहु कुसल जाउँ बलिहारी । अनुज सहित सुख भवन खरारी ॥ ३ ॥
कोमलचित कृपाल रघुराई । कपि केहि हेतु धरी निठुराई ॥ ४ ॥

aba kahu kusala jā'um^३ balihārī. anuja sahita sukha bhavana kharārī. 3.
kōmalacita kṛpāla raghurā'ī. kapi kēhi hētu dharī niṭhurā'ī. 4.

Now tell me, I beseech you, about the welfare of the younger brother (Laxman) of the Lord (Sri Ram) who is an abode of happiness and bliss, the Lord who had slayed the demon Khar¹; how are they both²? (3)

Oh Kapi (Hanuman)! Lord Ram is the great king of the Raghu dynasty (of Ayodhya) who is renowned for his soft heart and merciful nature. Say then, why has the Lord become so stern-hearted now (that he has yet not come to free me)³? (4)

[Note—¹This episode of Lord Ram slaying the demon Khar, along with his companions Dushan and Trishira, is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20. We have already read it earlier in connection with the deformation of the demoness Supernakha, the event that set in motion other events that culminated in Sita's abduction by Ravana and her incarnation in Lanka.

²Sita had named Laxman first, and then Lord Ram, when enquiring about their welfare. [anuja = Laxman; sahita = along or together with; sukha bhavana kharārī = Lord Ram.] She was especially very worried about Laxman and sorry that she had forced him to abandon her at the time when Lord Ram had gone pursuing the golden deer at her own behest. She was worried that Lord Ram would have been very angry at his younger brother to have defied his instructions not to leave Sita alone when he saw Laxman coming towards him whilst he was returning back to the hermitage after killing the deer, and his anger would have multiplied manifold when he found that Sita had been abducted because of Laxman's negligence. So Sita feared that Lord Ram may have severely punished Laxman, though the Lord loved him exceedingly like his own son, and this possibility, however remote, filled her with the greatest of worry and remorse, because Laxman was not at all at fault as it was she who had forced him to abandon her.

Since Sita too loved Laxman like her own son, she was extremely anxious of his welfare and safety. She was worried about Lord Ram also, but not to the extent of Laxman—because she knew that Lord Ram was invincible, able and almighty, and therefore capable of taking care of himself. A mother's tender heart is always more

worried about her son as compared to her husband; she always treats her son gingerly, has a soft corner for him, regarding him with the greatest of care and tenderness, thinking that he is easily susceptible to harm and injury no matter how strong, valiant and powerful he might be, even if he surpasses his father in these qualities. So that is why Sita asked for Laxman's welfare first.

It is to be noted that she has 'linked' the two, Laxman and Lord Ram, with the use of the conjunction 'sahita'—when she says 'how is the younger brother "along with" the kind Lord who had slayed Khar'. This shows that she was equally worried about them both; she loved them equally. Like a woman who is also a mother, Sita remembered her dear husband Lord Ram as much as she remembered Laxman whom she treated as her son!

This is why Sita took care not to ask about their welfare as independent persons, but as inseparable companions; if one were to think of Lord Ram, then Laxman would automatically come to mind. Remarkable indeed! It's a great tribute to Laxman's sacrifices that he had made for his brother Ram—right from his decision to forgo the comforts of a great kingdom of Ayodhya when he decided to accompany Lord Ram and Sita to the forest, through the travails of the journey in the wilds and the difficulties and sufferings that it entailed, supporting Lord Ram and standing with him shoulder-to-shoulder like a true friend, son and companion. Laxman had played a crucial role in helping Lord Ram overcome the pangs of grief that had all but drowned him at the time when Sita was stolen, and thereafter he was the Lord's moral support and comrade-in-arm through the testing times during which the fierce War of Lanka was fought, even suffering grievously and almost embracing death during its course.

[³Sita is suffering from intense agony of separation from her beloved Lord; and like someone who is suffering gravely from the pang of grief that accompanies such separation, she sort of holds him responsible for abandoning her for so long.]

सहज बानि सेवक सुख दायक । कबहुँक सुरति करत रघुनायक ॥ ५ ॥
 कबहुँ नयन मम सीतल ताता । होइहहिं निरखि स्याम मृदु गाता ॥ ६ ॥
 बचनु न आव नयन भरे बारी । अहह नाथ हौं निपट बिसारी ॥ ७ ॥

sahaja bāni sēvaka sukha dāyaka. kabahum̐ka surati karata raghunāyaka. 5.
 kabahum̐ nayana mama sītala tātā. hō'ihahiṁ nirakhi syāma mṛdu gātā. 6.
 bacanu na āva nayana bharē bārī. ahaha nātha hauṁ nipaṭa bisārī. 7.

The Lord has a natural habit of providing happiness and joy to his devotees, followers and those who serve him; he is always cordial towards them, and ensures that his words invariably show his affection for them. Tell me, does such a benevolent and kind-hearted Lord ever remembers me (and speaks about me in affectionate terms)? (5)

Tell me, oh dear son (tātā), when my eyes would find their comfort and cool by seeing the Lord's tender, dark-complexioned form? [To wit, tell me, when will I be able to see Lord Ram again?]' (6)

Sita was overcome with grief and sorrow as she remembered Lord Ram so much so that for some moments she could speak no more even as her eyes got filled with tears. Then she regained some semblance of courage and self-restraint, and exclaimed in excess of anguish, 'Alack oh Lord; it seems that I have been completely forgotten (by you).'¹ (7)

[Note—¹As we know, Lord Ram has not forgotten Sita at all. The very fact that Hanuman was there proves it. But Sita was suffering highly from emotional turmoil; she had lost all hopes of freedom and meeting Lord Ram again. We have read that she asked Trijata to arrange some firewood so she could die by burning herself, so desolate and hopeless she was feeling. But whilst earlier she used to keep her grief and memory of Lord Ram confined to herself, her pent-up emotions burst forth like an erupting volcano when she met Hanuman. It happens in excess of grief that a person feels so emotionally paralysed that he becomes numb and dumb; he seems to be like a lifeless statue. But as soon as some ray of hope, solace and succour shine through this foreboding darkness of despair and desolation, life in his grief-stricken heart is suddenly stirred up to express itself in the form of an exclamation that, though sounding like abject gloom, misery and helplessness, yet it also signals revival of hope and faith in his inner-being.

Sita felt her throat choked with emotions for a moment when hot tears filled her eyes and sorrows welled up in her heart like a rising storm; this storm of grief struck her hard and she was numbed for some time. Like a person who loses his footing and falls in the water when huge waves of the ocean strike him, but who soon recovers and gasps for breath to cling to dear life, calling out to his companions and exclaiming desperately, "save me, save me", Sita too muttered in a hoarse voice "why has Lord Ram neglected me; why is he taking so long to come to my rescue".

The intensity of suffering, the depth of agony and the intolerable pain of Sita's heart were only exacerbated when she met Hanuman, as his presence reminded her of the happier days she had spent in the company of Lord Ram. The soulful way she lamented, and the earnestness with which she prayed to Lord Ram to come to her rescue and provide her salvation and emancipation find a resonance in a number of verses of the Psalms in the Old Testament of the Holy Bible. These verses reflect the sadness of her heart, the desperation of her soul, the poignancy of her heart, and how she must have hoped that her prayers would be heard and answered soon by Lord Ram.

We shall now spend some moments to read some of the soul stirring and heart touching wonderful verses from the Psalms, as their reading would add beauty to our own narration, and lend depth and gravity to Sita's sense of grief and misery, as well as her desire for liberation.

Psalm, 3/1-7:-

1: LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! many are they that rise up against me.

2: Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.

3: But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

4: I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.

5: I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

6: I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me

round about.

7: Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God.

Psalm, 4/1:-

1: Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

Psalm, 6/1-10:-

1: O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2: Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

3: My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?

4: Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

5: For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

6: I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

7: Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

8: Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

9: The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

10: Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be ashamed suddenly.

Psalm, 7/1-2:-

1: O Lord my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

2: Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

Psalm, 13/1-6:-

1: How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? for ever? how long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

2: How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? how long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

3: Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

4: Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

5: But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

6: I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

Psalm, 17/6-13:-

6: I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.

7: Shew thy marvellous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.
 8: Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,
 9: From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.
 10: They are inclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.
 11: They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;
 12: Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.
 13: Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword.

Psalm, 18/4-6:-

4: The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.
 5: The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.
 6: In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

Psalm, 22/1-2, 12-13, 16-21:-

1: My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?
 2: O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.
 12: Many bulls (read "deomons") have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan (read 'Ravana') have beset me round.
 13: They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.
 16: For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have enclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.
 17: I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.
 18: They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.
 19: But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.
 20: Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.
 21: Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns.

Psalm, 25/6-7, 16-21:-

6: Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy loving kindnesses; for they have been ever of old.
 7: Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.
 16: Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I am desolate and afflicted.
 17: The troubles of my heart are enlarged: O bring thou me out of my distresses.
 18: Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.
 19: Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

20: O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.

21: Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

Psalm, 35/1-8, 22-26:-

1: Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

2: Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

3: Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

4: Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul: let them be turned back and brought to confusion that devise my hurt.

5: Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them.

6: Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

7: For without cause have they hid for me their net in a pit, which without cause they have digged for my soul.

8: Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

22: This thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

23: Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

24: Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

25: Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

26: Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.

Psalm, 40/11-15, 17:-

10: I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

11: Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.

12: For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

13: Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.

14: Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

15: Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

17: But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

Psalm, 43/5:-

5: Why art thou cast down, O my soul? and why art thou disquieted within me? hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

Psalm, 56/1-7:-

- 1: Be merciful unto me, O God: for man would swallow me up; he fighting daily oppresseth me.
- 2: Mine enemies would daily swallow me up: for they be many that fight against me, O thou most High.
- 3: What time I am afraid, I will trust in thee.
- 4: In God I will praise his word, in God I have put my trust; I will not fear what flesh can do unto me.
- 5: Every day they wrest my words: all their thoughts are against me for evil.
- 6: They gather themselves together, they hide themselves, they mark my steps, when they wait for my soul.
- 7: Shall they escape by iniquity? in thine anger cast down the people, O God.

Psalm, 57/1, 4-6:-

- 1: Be merciful unto me, O God, be merciful unto me: for my soul trusteth in thee: yea, in the shadow of thy wings will I make my refuge, until these calamities be overpast.
- 4: My soul is among lions: and I lie even among them that are set on fire, even the sons of men, whose teeth are spears and arrows, and their tongue a sharp sword.
- 5: Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens; let thy glory be above all the earth.
- 6: They have prepared a net for my steps; my soul is bowed down: they have digged a pit before me, into the midst whereof they are fallen themselves.

Psalm, 64/1-8:-

- 1: Hear my voice, O God, in my prayer: preserve my life from fear of the enemy.
- 2: Hide me from the secret counsel of the wicked; from the insurrection of the workers of iniquity:
- 3: Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot their arrows, even bitter words:
- 4: That they may shoot in secret at the perfect: suddenly do they shoot at him, and fear not.
- 5: They encourage themselves in an evil matter: they commune of laying snares privily; they say, Who shall see them?
- 6: They search out iniquities; they accomplish a diligent search: both the inward thought of every one of them, and the heart, is deep.
- 7: But God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded.
- 8: So they shall make their own tongue to fall upon themselves: all that see them shall flee away.

Psalm, 69/1-5, 16-18, 22-30:-

- 1: Save me, O God; for the waters are come in unto my soul.
- 2: I sink in deep mire, where there is no standing: I am come into deep waters, where the floods overflow me.
- 3: I am weary of my crying: my throat is dried: mine eyes fail while I wait for my God.
- 4: They that hate me without a cause are more than the hairs of mine head: they that

would destroy me, being mine enemies wrongfully, are mighty: then I restored that which I took not away.

5: O God, thou knowest my foolishness; and my sins are not hid from thee.

16: Hear me, O LORD; for thy lovingkindness is good: turn unto me according to the multitude of thy tender mercies.

17: And hide not thy face from thy servant; for I am in trouble: hear me speedily.

18: Draw nigh unto my soul, and redeem it: deliver me because of mine enemies.

22: Let their table become a snare before them: and that which should have been for their welfare, let it become a trap.

23: Let their eyes be darkened, that they see not; and make their loins continually to shake.

24: Pour out thine indignation upon them, and let thy wrathful anger take hold of them.

25: Let their habitation be desolate; and let none dwell in their tents.

26: For they persecute him whom thou hast smitten; and they talk to the grief of those whom thou hast wounded.

27: Add iniquity unto their iniquity: and let them not come into thy righteousness.

28: Let them be blotted out of the book of the living, and not be written with the righteous.

29: But I am poor and sorrowful: let thy salvation, O God, set me up on high.

30: I will praise the name of God with a song, and will magnify him with thanksgiving.

Psalm, 70/1-3:-

1: Make haste, O God, to deliver me; make haste to help me, O LORD.

2: Let them be ashamed and confounded that seek after my soul: let them be turned backward, and put to confusion, that desire my hurt.

3: Let them be turned back for a reward of their shame that say, Aha, aha.

Psalm, 130/1-6:-

1: Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.

2: Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

3: If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

4: But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

5: I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

6: My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

Psalm, 142/1-7:-

1: I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

2: I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

3: When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

4: I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

5: I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land

of the living.

6: Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

7: Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.]

देखि परम बिरहाकुल सीता । बोला कपि मृदु बचन बिनीता ॥ ८ ॥

मातु कुसल प्रभु अनुज समेता । तव दुख दुखी सुकृपा निकेता ॥ ९ ॥

जनि जननी मानहु जियँ ऊना । तुम्ह ते प्रेमु राम कें दूना ॥ १० ॥

dēkhi parama birahākula sītā. bōlā kapi mṛdu bacana binītā. 8.

mātu kusala prabhu anuja samētā. tava dukha dukhī sukrpā nikētā. 9.

jani janani mānahu jiyam' ūnā. tumha tē prēmu rāma kēm dūnā. 10.

When the Kapi (Hanuman) perceived that Sita was overwhelmed with excess of grief, sorrow and remorse, he replied to her using sweet and polite words, --- (8)

‘Mother (mātu), the Lord and his younger brother are both doing well. The Lord, who is an abode of extreme grace, mercy and kindness, is sad and grieving for you. [Mother, don’t think that Lord Ram has forgotten you; banish this unwarranted thought. The truth is that the Lord remembers you as much as you remember him, and is very worried for you.]¹ (9)

Oh Mother (jananī)! Don’t allow wrong ideas, false notions and baseless misgivings find any place in your heart, for the fact is that Lord Ram loves you twice as much as you love him. [Please banish such evil thoughts that have expressed themselves from your mouth when you exclaimed why Lord Ram has abandoned you. There is no truth in it.]² (10)

[Note—¹This is in answer to Sita’s query whether the Lord remembers her, in verse no. 5 herein above.

²This is in reply to Sita’s query as to why the Lord has forgotten her, in verse no. 7 herein above.]

दो०. रघुपति कर संदेसु अब सुनु जननी धरि धीर ।

अस कहि कपि गदगद भयउ भरे बिलोचन नीर ॥ १४ ॥

dōhā.

raghupati kara sandēsu aba sunu janani dhari dhīra.

asa kahi kapi gadagada bhaya'u bharē bilōcana nīra. 14.

Oh Mother (jananī)! Now have patience and listen to Lord Raghpati’s¹ message.’

Saying this, Hanuman was himself so overcome with emotions surging in his heart that he could not speak for some moments, and tears welled up in his eyes². (Doha no. 14)

[Note—¹In verse no. 5 Sita has referred to Lord Ram as ‘Raghunayak’, which means the same as the word ‘Raghupati’, i.e. the ‘Lord of the Raghu’s line of kings of the kingdom of Ayodhya’.

So being wise, Hanuman decided to use a similar word as the one used by Sita so that there would be no confusion in her mind that was already clouded by grief and worry regarding the Lord whose message Hanuman was about to convey her.

²Hanuman felt that he was so lucky and fortunate that he was chosen to become the spokesman for Lord Ram, the Supreme Being incarnate. He was overwhelmed with gratitude towards the Lord for providing him with this rare privilege and honour, for it will make him immortal in the annals of history as the one who carried Lord Ram’s message for Sita!

Remember: Sita has addressed Hanuman as her ‘son’—refer Chaupai line nos. 2 and 6 herein above. So Hanuman found his ‘mother’ who was there in a dire state; this filled him with grief, and tears welled up in his eyes and his throat became choked.]

चौ०. कहेउ राम बियोग तव सीता । मो कहूँ सकल भए बिपरीता ॥ १ ॥

नव तरु किसलय मनहुँ कृसानू । काल निसा सम निसि ससि भानू ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kahē'u rāma biyōga tava sītā. mō kahum' sakala bha'ē biparītā. 1.

nava taru kisalaya manahum' kṛsānū. kāla nisā sama nisi sasi bhānū. 2.

Hanuman conveyed Lord Ram’s grief and sorrows to Sita in the following words: ‘Lord Ram has given a message for you. He had said, “Sita, ever since I have been separated from you, all the things and situations (even ordinary ones that I had been taking for granted, and which never made me raise an eyebrow) have turned against me.

[To wit, everything appears to be inimical towards me; the whole world seems to be upside down for me; for my nerves are wrecked, my heart seems to sink in an abyss of despondency and grief, and my mind is befuddled like a man who is so intoxicated that he begins to hallucinate and sees things that actually don’t exist. I have been on an emotional roller-coaster ride that plunges me in deep chasms of dejection and misery for one moment, and then lifts me up in the arms of faith to heights of hope at the next moment. Friends appear like enemies; water becomes fire; day looks dark as night; food is poison; and my breath seems to burn my inner organs instead of infusing life into the body. Verily indeed, my condition is no better than yours; rather it’s far worse.] (1)

For instance, new and tender leaves on trees appear like tongues of fire to me¹, ordinary nights look like the dreadful night of the doomsday², and the moon (that is famed for its coolness) resembles the fiery, scorching ball of the sun³. (2)

[Note—¹Sita too thinks similarly, that the soft green leaves of the tree can provide her with fire, as we have already read in Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 12 herein above.

²When a person is suffering intensely with grief, and every moment of his life becomes a burden, the whole world around him becomes horrifyingly gloomy and dark and scary like the night of doomsday. This condition also prevailed in the magnificent city of Ayodhya, a city that was the envy of heaven, at the time Lord Ram, Sita and Laxman left it for the forest. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 83.

³Lord Ram says that when he lies down with his eyes shut, but perchance if he opens them and sees the moon in the sky, it reminds him of Sita's pretty face, and this memory once again ignites the fire of sorrow in his heart and burns it; so he immediately closes his eyes like someone who sees the sun by mistake and instantly shuts the eye involuntarily. The moon, instead of cooling his nerves, only scorches him.]

कुबलय बिपिन कुंत बन सरिसा । बारिद तपत तेल जनु बरिसा ॥ ३ ॥
जे हित रहे करत तेइ पीरा । उरग स्वास सम त्रिबिध समीरा ॥ ४ ॥

kubalaya bipina kunta bana sarisā. bārida tapata tēla janu barisā. 3.
jē hita rahē karata tē'i pīrā. uraga svāsa sama tribidha samīrā. 4.

A cluster of lotus flowers look like so many spears planted on the ground; and the clouds appear to pour down hot oil (instead of the cooling rain-water). (3)

It is such an irony that those elements which were earlier friendly and well-wishers inasmuch as they invariably gave peace and happiness to me have now become my tormentors and have turned hostile towards me. Even the three types of airs¹ have transformed themselves into the fiery breath spouting out of a dragon's mouth. (4)

[Note—¹The three types of airs alluded to here are the three qualities of the wind, such as a soft breeze, a cool wind, and a fragrant air. It also may mean the following: (i) the soft, fragrant and cool breeze that wafts slowly and caresses a person with its feather-like touch; (ii) the life-giving air that one breathes; and (iii) the air of the atmosphere.

Lord Ram means that life has become very suffocating and unbearable for him in the absence of Sita. All the primary elements of life—such as the air (the present verse no. 4), the sky (represented by the night, the moon and the sun in verse no. 2), the water (represented by the cloud in verse no. 3), the fire (represented by the leaves that look like tongues of fire as in verse no. 2), and the earth (represented by the lotus flower that seem to be spears planted on the ground as in verse no. 3)—have become his tormentors.]

कहेहू ते कछु दुख घटि होई । काहि कहौं यह जान न कोई ॥ ५ ॥

तत्त्व प्रेम कर मम अरु तोरा । जानत प्रिया एकु मनु मोरा ॥ ६ ॥
 सो मनु सदा रहत तोहि पाहीं । जानु प्रीति रसु एतनेहि माहीं ॥ ७ ॥

kahēhū tēm kachu dukha ghaṭi hō'ī. kāhi kahaurṁ yaha jāna na kō'ī. 5.
 tatva prēma kara mama aru tōrā. jānata priyā ēku manu mōrā. 6.
 sō manu sadā rahata tōhi pāhīm. jānu prīti rasu ētanēhi māhīm. 7.

It is believed that if one speaks about one's grief and agony to someone who empathizes with him and is friendly inclined, then the intensity of sorrow decreases to some extent. But to whom should I speak to share my misery; for I have no one with whom I can confide, and no one would understand it even if I did speak. So I have to suffer silently within, and no one knows how much I suffer. (5)

Oh my dear (priyā)! The secret of the affection that exist between you and me, the bond of love that binds you and me, is known only to me; for my Mana (i.e. my heart and mind) alone is aware of its depth and purity. (6)

And that 'Mana' of mine dwells where you are. Regard these as indicators of my love and affection for you.

[To wit, though physical distance separates us, my soul still is with you. I always remember you; my heart has no place for any other entity except you; and my mind is occupied with your thoughts and memory. I pass my days in abject agony; my breath is fiery hot and it burns me; my friends look like enemies and I can't share my grief with anyone to lessen the burden of my heart. So don't think I have forgotten you.]¹ (7)

[Note—¹This statement is in answer to Sita's query in verse no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 14 where she asks Hanuman if Lord Ram ever remembered her.

The ornate and flowery language, with its liberal usage of similes and metaphors, that Hanuman employs to assuage Sita's agitated state and to infuse hope in her was surely his own. When a leader sends someone as an emissary, whom he selects with due care for his wisdom, intelligence, prudence, and skill at negotiation, he only gives a brief to his representative, leaving the details of what is to be said, and how the situation is to be handled on the ground, to the emissary himself, for how the things would turn out can't be predicted in advance, and hence tutoring the messenger is impossible.

Lord Ram had just briefly told Hanuman what he was expected to do: "just go and meet Sita, introduce yourself and give this ring of mine for identification, reassure her in different ways as you deem fit, remind her about my strength and powers, tell her to have patience and wait as I will soon go to free her from the clutches of her captors, and then come back hastily". Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-11 that precede Doha no. 23.

Remember: Hundreds of monkey and bear warriors were present at that time, and they had their eyes and ears fixed on Lord Ram. So it would have been impractical, imprudent, indecent and immodest for the Lord to speak in such intimate language, as Hanuman now uses, in the presence of that assembly; giving the ring quietly and saying a few confidential words briefly to Hanuman is a different thing from showing emotions and making sentimental utterances.

Hence, like an intelligent and wise emissary, Hanuman used his own discretion for the way he reassured Sita. He had seen her miserable condition; he had heard what she said to Trijata and the Tree; and he had heard what she had said directly to him. So, he adapted his message to suit her mental state.]

प्रभु संदेसु सुनत बैदेही । मगन प्रेम तन सुधि नहिं तेही ॥ ८ ॥
 कह कपि हृदयँ धीर धरु माता । सुमिरु राम सेवक सुखदाता ॥ ९ ॥
 उर आनहु रघुपति प्रभुताई । सुनि मम बचन तजहु कदराई ॥ १० ॥

prabhu sandēsu sunata baidēhī. magana prēma tana sudhi nahim tēhī. 8.
 kaha kapi hr̥dayam̐ dhīra dharu mātā. sumiru rāma sēvaka sukhadātā. 9.
 ura ānahu raghupati prabhutāī. suni mama bacana tajahu kadarāī. 10.

When Vaidehi (Sita) heard the message of the Lord (Sri Ram), she became so much overwhelmed with love and affection that she lost awareness of her own body.

[For a moment she forgot all about her sufferings and miseries; she forgot that she was weak and hadn't slept for days. She no longer yearned for death, for new hope sprung forth in her heart like a well-spring of life.] (8)

Hanuman said, 'Mother, have patience, resilience and courage in your heart. Keep remembering Lord Ram who grants happiness, joy and bliss to his devotees and followers who serve him (sēvaka sukhadātā). (9)

Invoke the glories and majesty of Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram) in your heart. Pay heed to my advice, and abandon all your misgivings, banish all ill-thoughts, and free your mind from gloomy forebodings.¹

[¹Mother; I advise you to stop regretting for the past as you cannot change it; be confident in your present as the future rests upon it; and have hope for the future as there is always a sunrise after the darkness of the night. Don't be disheartened and forlorn; have faith as it is the basis of hope, and hope is the basis of life. If you live, you will meet Lord Ram again; but if you despair and lose life then you will drag the Lord along with you. Would you like that to happen? Then listen to me: have patience and courage.] (10)

दो०. निसिचर निकर पतंग सम रघुपति बान कृसानु ।
 जननी हृदयँ धीर धरु जरे निसाचर जानु ॥ १५ ॥

dōhā.

nisicara nikara pataṅga sama raghupati bāna kṛsānu.
 janani hr̥dayam̐ dhīra dharu jarē nisācara jānu. 15.

The demon hordes are like a swarm of insects, whilst the arrows of Lord Ram are like a blazing fire. Oh Mother (jananī)! Be resilient, have patience and courage in your heart, and consider these demons as good as burnt out insects¹. (Doha no. 15)

[Note—¹Just as insects are lured towards the flame and get burnt consequentially, so will all the demons die when hit by Lord Ram's powerful fiery arrows. Oh Mother, there is no doubt about it.]

चौ०. जौं रघुबीर होति सुधि पाई । करते नहिं बिलंबु रघुराई ॥ १ ॥

राम बान रबि उएँ जानकी । तम बरूथ कहँ जातुधान की ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ raghubīra hōti sudhi pā'ī. karatē nahim bilambu raghurā'ī. 1.
rāma bāna rabi u'ēm' jānakī. tama barūtha kham' jātudhāna kī. 2.

Had Lord Ram, the Great Lord of king Raghu's line (raghurā'ī), been aware of your whereabouts, then forsooth and without gainsay he would not have delayed even for a moment¹. (1)

Oh Daughter of Janak ("jānakī"; Sita)! When the dazzling sun symbolized by Lord Ram's splendorous arrows rises in the sky over the horizon, say then where will the darkness represented by the demon remain²? (2)

[Note—¹This assurance is in reply to Sita's question as to why Lord Ram has become so stone-hearted that he has not come yet to free her, in Chaupai no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 14 herein above.

²The imagery is excellent. The sun rises in the horizon, traverses through the sky, and then sets in the opposite horizon. When Lord Ram would shoot his shining arrows, they will rise from the ground, follow their trajectory across the sky, and then descend upon the demons to kill them before hitting the ground on the opposite side of the battle-field. The war and its many battles would be fought during the day time, and so the sunlight would make the arrows gleam brilliantly, like shafts of lightening darting across the firmament.

Here, the gleaming arrows of Lord Ram are likened to the rays of the sun, and the dark-complexioned demons, whose inner-selves too are dark due to sin and evil they stand for, are likened to the darkness of the night.]

अबहिं मातु मैं जाउँ लवाई । प्रभु आयसु नहिं राम दोहाई ॥ ३ ॥

कछुक दिवस जननी धरु धीरा । कपिन्ह सहित अइहहिं रघुबीरा ॥ ४ ॥

निसिचर मारि तोहि लै जैहहिं । तिहुँ पुर नारदादि जसु गैहहिं ॥ ५ ॥

abahim mātu maim jā'um' lavā'ī. prabhu āyasu nahim rāma dōhā'ī. 3.
kachuka divasa janani dharu dhīrā. kapinha sahita a'ihahim raghubīrā. 4.
niscara māri tōhi lai jaiham. tihum' pura nāradādi jasu gaihahim. 5.

Mother (mātu), I can take you back this instant itself, but I don't have this mandate from the Lord, I say this truthfully to you on oath of Lord Ram.

[Please mother, understand my predicament. It's not that I can't free you right now, but I don't have the permission to do so, neither from Lord Ram nor from Angad, our prince, or from Jamvant, our elderly advisor and the one who had inspired me to rise up to the occasion and come here. So therefore, I am constrained to exercise great restraint on my natural instinct, which wants me to take you back immediately.¹] (3)

Mother (jananī)! Have patience for some more days², for Lord Ram, the brave Lord of the Raghu dynasty (raghubīrā), would come soon with a formidable army of Kapis (monkeys and bears). (4)

He will slay the demons and take you back to freedom with all honour. It would be a glorious and grand event, so magnificent, so majestic and so singular that celestial sages like Narad and other minstrels would glorify it and make it immortal through their songs and ballads for all times to come.

[So therefore, don't despond mother; have courage and patience and hope, for these are forsooth the virtues of life. I'll go back and soon bring Lord Ram here; the Lord would come with a formidable army of monkeys and bears, and upon my honour I say to you to have faith in me, to trust me and the words of a gentleman, that all these demons who have caused you so much trouble and torment would be defeated and slayed in the war that would ensue to free you. Be certain mother that you will indeed be freed, of which there is no gainsay.]' (5)

[Note—¹Lord Ram as well as Jamvant had given clear instructions to Hanuman to just go and find about Sita, and come back with her news. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 23; and Chaupai line nos. 11-12 that precede Doha no. 30 respectively.

²Hanuman had heard already that Ravana had given a one-month grace period to Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10 herein above.} So there was a lot of time in hand; Ravana would definitely not harm Sita during this grace period as, though he was a demon, he was a great king, and kings are known by their words, for if a king loses his word he loses his honour, and the right to be called a 'king'; so this was the guarantee.

And, come to think of it, it was also the reason why Ravana did no harm to Sita even his cherished golden city of Lanka was burnt to cinders by Hanuman, about which we shall read shortly, and later on as the ferocious bloody war raged all around, when Lord Ram actually came with his army, even as one after another of all the great demon warriors bit the dust, so much so that his own son Meghnad, as well as his brother Kumbhakaran, too died. Truly indeed, such is the importance that great kings gave to their word of honour. This principle is explicitly declared in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 28 where king Dasrath himself declares "It is a established doctrine and a matter of honour for the kings of the Raghu's line that it is better to die than to break one's word".]

हैं सुत कपि सब तुम्हहि समाना । जातुधान अति भट बलवाना ॥ ६ ॥
 मोरें हृदय परम संदेहा । सुनि कपि प्रगट कीन्हि निज देहा ॥ ७ ॥
 कनक भूधराकार सरीरा । समर भयंकर अतिबल बीरा ॥ ८ ॥

सीता मन भरोस तब भयऊ । पुनि लघु रूप पवनसुत लयऊ ॥ ९ ॥

haiṁ suta kapi saba tumhahi samānā. jātudhāna ati bhaṭa balavānā. 6.
mōrēm hr̥daya parama sandēhā. suni kapi pragaṭa kīnhi nija dēhā. 7.
kanaka bhūdharākāra sarīrā. samara bhayaṅkara atibala bīrā. 8.
sītā mana bharōsa taba bhaya'ū. puni laghu rūpa pavanāsuta laya'ū. 9.

[Upon this assertion of Hanuman—one, that he could have taken her back if he had the permission of Lord Ram, and two, that Lord Ram would come with an army of Kapis to kill the demons and free her—Sita expressed her reservations. The demons were cruel giants; they had huge forms and fierce demeanours; their teeth and nails were like long spears and sharp swords, with which they could tear apart anything no matter how strong and thick it was; their blows put to shame the force of the sledgehammer; eating live creatures raw, and drinking their blood in draughts as if it were wine, was their repast; knowing no mercy and ever ready to shed blood at the slightest provocation, and often even without it, they had trampled underfoot and crushed even the mightiest of warriors, not even sparing the gods of heaven who trembled by the mere mention of their names.

To wit, Sita had her doubts; she wondered if Hanuman's assurances were nothing more than airy bluster; merely a loud talk and pretentious boastfulness with no pith in it. He had a small frame, which was like that of a pygmy, no comparison of course to his adversary, the demons, who were awe-inspiringly colossal in their mere size.

So, unable to repress her anxiety, and so much the better for it because it was far wiser to be sure of something so serious and of grave consequence as that which was proposed, than to rely upon imaginary virtues of chivalry, valiance and bravery only to be ridiculed and dishonoured in the end, Sita said to Hanuman—]

‘My dear son (suta)! All the Kapis (monkeys and bears) must be like you are in their forms (diminutive and like pygmies in size), whereas the demon warriors are giants who not only have colossal frames but are also very powerful and strong (befitting their huge frames). (6)

This has caused a lot of doubt in my mind (if what you say is actually feasible).’

Hearing these words of Sita, Hanuman revealed his true form. (7)

This form was like a golden-coloured mountain, for it was huge and colossus. [To wit, it was the form that Hanuman had revealed to Jamvant and others prior to his departure for Lanka¹.]

This formidable form inspired awe and instilled fear in the mind and heart of the enemy in a battle, for it was most terrifying and fearful, one that was evidently full of strength, courage and valour. (7)

When Sita saw this form of Hanuman, she became reassured; her mind and heart now had faith on the truthfulness of what he had said to her. She no more had any trace of doubts lingering in her.

Soon after that, the son of the wind-god (“pavanāsuta”; Hanuman) reverted back to his diminutive form². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 30.

²Hanuman showed his colossus form for a few minutes, just enough to satisfy Sita. He quickly became small in size, because he wished not to be detected before he would so wish. But this momentary sight reassured Sita that the monkeys and bears were indeed good matches for the demons; rather they surpassed their adversaries by many notches.

The use of the epithet ‘son of the wind-god’ is significant here: the air or the wind is so subtle and invisible that it can enter the smallest crevice easily, even without anyone noticing it. Even light can do so, but there is a big difference between the two. Light would travel only in a straight line, and if the cavern makes a bend, the path of the light would be blocked. But it is not so with the air, or the wind; it would enter at one end of the long corridor, flow through its bends and curves, highs and lows, and make its presence felt at the other end which is at a complete different angle or plane from the point of its entrance. To wit, air has maneuverability and flexibility that other elements of Nature lack, for neither the earth, nor the fire or the water can have it; as the ‘earth’ is fettered by its weight and gravity, the ‘fire’ would lose its heat with distance, and ‘water’ would dry up and evaporate if it has to flow long distances.

Besides this, only the ‘air’ can move about in an invisible form; earth, fire and water can’t remain hidden from sight for long.

To wit, Hanuman, being the ‘son of the wind-god’, had certain singular qualities that no one else possessed, and one such quality was his ability to get in and out without being visibly noticed, and the other was to expand to any size he wished, for his ‘parent’, the wind, can expand to fill the whole space of the sky or limit itself to a small balloon, not to mention of course the powerful force that the ‘wind’ inherently possesses, a force that can cause trees to topple, huge waves to rise in the ocean, and raise dust storms in a desert that obscure the sun.]

दो०. सुनु माता साखामृग नहिं बल बुद्धि बिसाल ।

प्रभु प्रताप तें गरुड़हि खाइ परम लघु ब्याल ॥ १६ ॥

dōhā.

sunu mātā sākhāmṛga nahim bala bud'dhi bisāla.

prabhu pratāpa tēm garuṛahi khā'i parama laghu byāla. 16.

Hanuman said to Sita, ‘Listen mother! Those who dwell on the branches of trees (“sākhāmṛga”; here referring to the Kapis, the monkeys) do not have any commendable strength or wisdom of their own, but it doesn’t really matters for even a small snake can devour Garud (who is Lord Vishnu’s mount and famed as the eater of serpents, for whom serpents are like fodder) by the grace of the Lord (Sri Ram)¹’.

[To wit, impossible things become possible if the Lord God so wishes. So don’t you worry; for even if the Kapis are weaker in strength and power than the demons, yet if Lord Ram would so wish then the same Kapis would trounce the demons without hesitation, without doubt. So, have faith.] (Doha no. 16)

[Note—¹In this verse, Hanuman shows his humility and devotion for his Lord, Sri Ram. He credits all achievements, of his present efforts as well as all the future

successes of his compatriots in the war that is shortly to commence, on the glory and grace of Lord Ram.

He also addresses Sita's reservations expressed by her in verse nos. 6-7 herein above. Sita need not worry at all; even if what she says were to be true, that the Kapis are no match for the demons, yet she has forgotten about one factor—about the divinity, the glory and the majestic powers that Lord Ram possesses.

If the king is powerful and strong, and his army committed and devoted to him, and this is aided by the fact that the cause and objective for which the war is fought is righteous, noble and honourable, then the victory will surely be theirs; there is no doubt about it.]

चौ०. मन संतोष सुनत कपि बानी । भगति प्रताप तेज बल सानी ॥ १ ॥
 आसिष दीन्हि रामप्रिय जाना । होहु तात बल सील निधाना ॥ २ ॥
 अजर अमर गुननिधि सुत होहू । करहुँ बहुत रघुनायक छोहू ॥ ३ ॥
 करहुँ कृपा प्रभु अस सुनि काना । निर्भर प्रेम मगन हनुमाना ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

mana santōṣa sunata kapi bānī. bhagati pratāpa tēja bala sānī. 1.
 āsiṣa dīnhi rāmapriya jānā. hōhu tāta bala sīla nidhānā. 2.
 ajara amara gunanidhi suta hōhū. karahum' bahuta raghunāyaka chōhū. 3
 karahum' kṛpā prabhu asa suni kānā. nirbhara prēma magana hanumānā. 4.

When Sita heard Kapi's (Hanuman's) words imbued with the glorious virtues of devotion, valour, dynamism, self-confidence, courage and strength, she was extremely glad and felt very contented in her heart and mind ("mana santōṣa")¹. (1)

Sita's heart overflowed with gratitude and love for him as she realized that Hanuman was very dear to Lord Ram, and his favourite. Blessing him profusely from the innermost recesses of her heart, she said, 'My dear son (tāta)! May you become an abode of strength, courage and valour; may you be a repository of all the glorious and excellent virtues there are (bala sīla nidhānā)! (2)

My son (suta)! May you ever remain immune to the decay that the body suffers from due to the aging process; may you become immortal; may you be a treasury of all the excellent virtues and the best of qualities that exist in this world! And to crown these blessings, may Lord Ram (raghunāyaka) always be exceptionally gracious and most kind upon you.' (3)

When Hanuman heard with his ears the last blessing of Sita, viz. "may Lord Ram always be gracious and kind upon you", he was so overwhelmed with gratitude, with emotions of love and affection surging in his heart, that for some time he lost awareness of his own self². (4)

[Note—¹Hanuman's words were a moment of epiphany for Sita; she realized that he was truly devoted to Lord Ram, was totally committed to him, and was determined to serve the Lord most diligently, faithfully and sincerely, to the best of his ability.

We have read in previous verses how Hanuman had assured Sita that her sufferings would soon end, that Lord Ram remembers her, grieves for her, and loves her twice as much as she loves him. He had also reminded her of the Lord's majesty, exceptional glories, astounding strength and dynamic powers, reassuring her that her tormentors, the evil demons, would be reduced to ashes by the fire-spewing arrows of Lord Ram which would burn them just like flies are burnt when they swarm around the flames of a raging fire; it would be such a fantastic feat that would be remembered and sung by sages, minstrels and bards for generations after generations to come. Hanuman had also told Sita that he was a devoted servant of Lord Ram, and though he was capable to take her back immediately yet he desists from doing so as it would violate the orders of the Lord, as he had told him just to go and find about her. All these things hint at the virtues listed here for Hanuman—devotion, glory, valour, self-confidence, strength and courage. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 16.}

²We have read earlier that when Sita heard that Lord Ram remembers her and loves her much, she too was overwhelmed with joy and gratitude, and had become so emotional that for some moments she had lost awareness of her own body like the way Hanuman felt when Sita blessed him that he would eternally be in the gracious looks of the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 15.}}

बार बार नाएसि पद सीसा । बोला बचन जोरि कर कीसा ॥ ५ ॥
अब कृतकृत्य भयउँ मैं माता । आसिष तव अमोघ बिख्याता ॥ ६ ॥

bāra bāra nā'ēsi pada sīsā. bōlā bacana jōri kara kīsā. 5.
aba kṛtakṛtya bhaya'um' mairi mātā. āsiṣa tava amōgha bikhyātā. 6.

The Kapi ("kīsā"; Hanuman) bowed his head repeatedly at the feet of Sita, and clasping his hands in supplication and humility, he said --- (5)

'Oh mother (mātā)! I am fully contented and fulfilled; I have accomplished all that is to be accomplished; I am exceptionally grateful and obliged to you (kṛtakṛtya)—for in all sooth and without gainsay, it is known throughout the world that your blessings are infallible and inviolable. [Indeed, I am so fortunate; I am lucky as no one has ever been.] (6)

सुनहु मातु मोहि अतिसय भूखा । लागि देखि सुंदर फल रूखा ॥ ७ ॥
सुनु सुत करहिं बिपिन रखवारी । परम सुभट रजनीचर भारी ॥ ८ ॥
तिन्ह कर भय माता मोहि नाहीं । जौं तुम्ह सुख मानहु मन माहीं ॥ ९ ॥

sunahu mātu mōhi atisaya bhūkhā. lāgi dēkhi sundara phala rūkhā. 7.
sunu suta karahim bipina rakhavārī. parama subhaṭa rajanīcara bhārī. 8.
tinha kara bhaya mātā mōhi nāhīm. jauṁ tumha sukha mānahu mana māhīm.

9.

Listen mother, I am feeling very hungry, and my hunger is particularly stoked by the sight of beautiful raw-and-ripe fruits (sundara phala rūkhā) that I perceive on the trees that are in abundance in this garden.

[To wit, had there been no fruit-trees around this place, perhaps my hunger would have remained forgotten by me as I have a lot of work to do. But I can't help; the sight and the smell of this ripe succulent fruits have ignited my appetite which is now gnawing at my stomach, which seems to be empty; I am starving, and can't wait any longer to eat. So mother, if I have your permission, can I eat?]¹ (7)

Sita replied, 'Listen son. This garden is being protected by exceptionally strong and bold demon guards. [So it is fraught with grave danger to openly eat fruits from the trees here. I don't want to put you to any unwarranted risks; so I am not sure whether I should agree with your request.]' (8)

[When Sita expressed her reservations, Hanuman assured her that if she is pleased by his eating fruits from the trees, then she should not worry about anything else because he is competent to tackle all other matters.]

Hanuman said, 'Mother, if you are pleased and feel happy in your heart by allowing me to eat fruits from these trees, then be rest assured that I have no fear from these demon warriors who guard the garden. [To hell with them; I don't bother a dime about these demon guards as long as you have no objection to my eating these fruits.]' (9)

[Note—¹It is a common observation that when a person has to do some important work he loses his appetite till the time that work is not finished, but as soon as the work is completed he suddenly feels very hungry. So was also the case with Hanuman—his mission was successful, for he had found Sita, had talked with her, had given Lord Ram's ring to her, and had also assured her that soon the Lord would come to free her. He was now set to return home when he saw the beautiful fruit trees. This suddenly made him feel hungry, and so he sought Sita's permission to eat.]

दो०. देखि बुद्धि बल निपुन कपि कहेउ जानकीं जाहु ।

रघुपति चरन हृदयँ धरि तात मधुर फल खाहु ॥ १७ ॥

dōhā.

dēkhi bud'dhi bala nipuna kapi kahē'u jānakīm jāhu.

raghupati carana hr̥dayam̐ dhari tāta madhura phala khāhu. 17.

Perceiving that the Kapi (Hanuman) was very wise, intelligent, prudent and adroit, as well as able, strong and valiant, Janki (Sita) gave him her assent, granting him permission to eat fruits to satisfy his hunger. She said, 'Go my son; after invoking the holy feet of Lord Ram and enshrining them in your heart, eat as many sweet and succulent fruits as is your desire. (Doha no. 17)

[Note—Sita has put only one condition for Hanuman—which is to remember Lord Ram and fix his attention on the holy feet of the Lord while he eats as many fruits as

he wants. This means that as long as Hanuman remembers the holy feet of the Lord, as long as he keeps in mind that the Lord is his guardian and protector, no harm can ever come to him; it is a veritable shield that would protect him.

A devotee should take a hint from this advice of Sita—that if he remembers Lord Ram, and always keeps in his mind that the Lord is his greatest protector and a benevolent guardian, then he would be rest assured that no harm whatever can come to him.

Earlier, in Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 17 herein above, we come across a similar idea concerning the excellent qualities of Hanuman.]

चौ०. चलेउ नाइ सिरु पैठेउ बागा । फल खाएसि तरु तोरैं लागा ॥ १ ॥
 रहे तहाँ बहु भट रखवारे । कछु मारेसि कछु जाइ पुकारे ॥ २ ॥
 नाथ एक आवा कपि भारी । तेहिं असोक बाटिका उजारी ॥ ३ ॥
 खाएसि फल अरु बिटप उपारे । रच्छक मर्दि मर्दि महि डारे ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

calē'u nā'i siru paiṭhē'u bāgā. phala khā'ēsi taru tōraiṁ lāgā. 1.
 rahē tahām̐ bahu bhaṭa rakhavārē. kachu mārēsi kachu jā'i pukārē. 2.
 nātha ēka āvā kapi bhārī. tēhiṁ asōka bāṭikā ujārī. 3.
 khā'ēsi phala aru biṭapa upārē. racchaka mardī mardī mahi ḍārē. 4.

After receiving Sita's permission, Hanuman bowed his head at her feet and proceeded quietly towards the part of the garden which was rich with fruit trees. Once there, he started eating fruits at random, nibbling a little of one and biting a piece of another, all the while breaking trees and their branches (by violently shaking them). (1)

There were numerous guards to protect the garden; some of them were thrashed by Hanuman, others were killed by him, and some who managed to escape took to flight, running to inform their king Ravana about the violent intruder and havoc that he had unleashed in the royal garden¹. (2)

They cried out, 'Oh Lord, a huge monkey has come from somewhere, and he has laid the Ahoka grove to waste. (3)

He is eating fruits (and throwing them all over), uprooting trees, and breaking their branches. As for the guards, he has thrashed all of them mercilessly; some are lying wounded and some dead on the ground.

[The situation the Ashok garden is extremely explosive, and never ever in our lives have we experienced anything of this sort. The garden is ruined, its guards dead or wounded, and the intruder is running amok in it, without anyone being able to stop him. There is complete mayhem and havoc in the garden; virtually all our guards have been massacred; we somehow managed to flee with our lives to inform you, otherwise we were also as good as dead.]' (4)

[Note—¹As soon as Hanuman went on the rampage in the orchard full of ripe and succulent trees, a place that was well planned and laid out as it was Ravana's private garden-of-pleasure, the demon soldiers guarding it panicked as they were caught

totally unawares by the unexpected and sudden assault; they were on the back-foot right from the start even as Hanuman mercilessly beat them, resulting in some suffering from severe wounds, and some dying in the mayhem that followed. Feeling out-manuevered and overrun by him, they ran helter-skelter in complete disarray like a defeated army retreating in great haste to escape the wrath of the victorious enemy in hot pursuit, or like dry leaves scattering during a severe storm.

Why did Hanuman ruin Ravana's precious garden? One reason is that he was seething with anger from the time he first saw Sita in a sorry state, and then when he heard Ravana threatening her with dire consequences, even warning to kill her at the end of one month, the fire of his anger was fuelled further. So therefore he wanted to teach Ravana a bitter lesson. The other reason is that he wanted to see how the demon army worked, how prepared it was, what its weapons were, and get an idea of the morale of its soldiers. The third reason is that he wanted to have a personal interview with Ravana so as to judge him, to see him from close quarters, and try to understand his mind and intentions; this would also give him an opportunity to become acquainted with his chief courtiers, so that he can recognize them by face later on. The fourth reason was that he wished to see the city of Lanka as well as the royal court of Ravana by the day light in order see the details of the place's general lay out and topography, and to get an idea of the position of its defenses and population. And the fifth and the most important reason was to break the morale and the courage of the demons, to instill fear in their hearts and terror in their minds, by single-handedly crushing the demon warriors who protected the royal garden, beating and killing them ruthlessly, and devastating the garden itself.

Not only this, more insult and humiliation of the demons were waiting for them, for soon we shall read that Hanuman set the city of Lanka on fire, a raging fire that ravaged the whole city and reduced it to cinders so much so that the famed 'gilded city of Lanka', that was once the envy of heaven, was turned into an eerie and ghostly place of smouldering, blackened and burnt out structures. If any residual pride and esteem was still left in Ravana after the destruction of his favourite garden, then surely it was reduced to dust when his cherished golden city of Lanka was burnt down right before his nose, without his being able to either stop or capture the perpetrator of this large scale devastation.]

सुनि रावन पठए भट नाना । तिन्हहि देखि गर्जेउ हनुमाना ॥ ५ ॥
 सब रजनीचर कपि संघारे । गए पुकारत कछु अधमारे ॥ ६ ॥
 पुनि पठयउ तेहिं अछकुमारा । चला संग लै सुभट अपारा ॥ ७ ॥
 आवत देखि बिटप गहि तर्जा । ताहि निपाति महाधुनि गर्जा ॥ ८ ॥

suni rāvana paṭha'e bhaṭa nānā. tinahi dēkhi garjē'u hanumānā. 5.
 saba rajanīcara kapi saṅghārē. ga'ē pukārata kachu adhamārē. 6.
 puni paṭhaya'u tēhim acchakumārā. calā saṅga lai subhaṭa apārā. 7.
 āvata dēkhi biṭapa gahi tarjā. tāhi nipāti mahādhuni garjā. 8.

When Ravana heard of the devastation caused by Hanuman, as reported by the guards, he immediately dispatched innumerable demon warriors to the site (to restore order and capture the intruder). However, when Hanuman saw them, he roared aloud (as if to challenge them, and show his utter contempt towards them). (5)

The Kapi (Hanuman) slayed almost all of the demons; the few who somehow managed to escape death, though they were thrashed viciously black-and-blue, ran back with their lives, yelling and pleading in terror.

[To wit, the demons were beaten so ferociously by Hanuman that they were left more dead than alive. The few demon warriors who survived the slaughter ran back in panic to the court of Ravana, limping and staggering, some dumb out of fear and others howling in horror, to report to him of the complete rout of the army.] (6)

Then he (Ravana) sent (his son) Akshayakumar. He proceeded to the site of the confrontation (i.e. the Ashok garden) with a detachment of his crack troops. (7)

As soon as he (Hanuman) saw him (Akshayakumar) approach, he uprooted a huge tree and held it in his hands to threaten him; he then hit the latter (Akshaykumar) so hard with this tree that he fell down dead (with a single blow). Then Hanuman yelled and roared thunderously¹. (8)

[Note—¹After killing Akshayakumar with the blow of the tree, Hanuaman roared in victory. It ought to be noted that Akshayakumar was the first member of the Ravana's family who has died. Obviously his death not only alarmed Ravana but also made him seethe with anger, determined to take revenge.]

दो०. कछु मारेसि कछु मर्देसि कछु मिलएसि धरि धूरि ।
कछु पुनि जाइ पुकारे प्रभु मर्कट बल भूरि ॥ १८ ॥

dōhā.

kachu mārēsi kachu mardēsi kachu mila'ēsi dhari dhūri.
kachu puni jā'i pukārē prabhu markāṭa bala bhūri. 18.

Out of the demon warriors who had come with Akshayakumar, some were killed, some crushed and smothered, some were caught and stomped underfoot in dust, and some who survived this mayhem and slaughter ran back in panic to plead urgently with Ravana, 'Alack oh Lord, this intruding monkey is terror personified; he seems to be too strong and invincible for us.'¹ (Doha no. 18)

[Note--¹The demon warriors told Ravana that Hanuman had unleashed complete havoc and created utter chaos all over in the royal garden. When Ravana observed the severely wounded demons who were trembling in horror and had fear writ all over their faces, all drenched in blood and somehow just able to breathe and stand on their feet as they were more dead than alive, so when they made no mention of Akshayakumar, Ravana had a hunch that his son was dead, though of course none of the demons had the courage to mention this bad tidings in explicit terms as they feared inviting Ravana's fiery anger and instant punishment, most certainly which would be death.]

चौ०. सुनि सुत बध लंकेस रिसाना । पठएसि मेघनाद बलवाना ॥ १ ॥

मारसि जनि सुत बाँधेसु ताही । देखिअ कपिहि कहाँ कर आही ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunī suta badha laṅkāsa risānā. paṭha'ēsi mēghanāda balavānā. 1.
māraṣi jani suta bāmdhēsu tāhī. dēkhi'a kapihi kahām' kara āhī. 2.

When the king of Lanka (“laṅkāsa”; Ravana) heard of the death of his son (Akshayakumar)¹, he got furious; he then sent Meghanad² (his other son), who was extremely strong and powerful (to take revenge). (1)

Ravana instructed him—‘Son, don’t kill the intruder; just tie him up and bring him here. Let us see who this Kapi (monkey) is, and from whither has he come.’ (2)

[Note—¹The demon warriors who came to report to Ravana had only told him that “the monkey is extremely powerful”: refer Doha no. 18 herein above. But they did not have the guts to clearly tell him that Akshayakumar was also dead as they feared that the demon who would dare to utter this bad news would be singled out to become the object of Ravana’s severe wrath. But Ravana was an intelligent king, and so he could easily guess that his son was no longer alive; for had he been alive these reporters would have told Ravana that his son was safe and has sent such and such urgent message from the battle front, for instance seeking reinforcements. From their terrified countenance and panicky demeanours Ravana could easily deduce that things had gone real nasty on the ground, and that his son Akshayakumar was no more.

²Meghnad was so-called because he could roar as loud as the clap of thunder. “Megha” = cloud, especially rain-bearing clouds that produce lightening and thunder; “Naad” = a loud reverberating noise.

He is also called ‘Indrajeet’ or the one who had conquered Indra, the king of Gods. This relates to the event when he had defeated Indra in a battle to free his father Ravana from his captivity. This story is narrated in Anand Ramayan (of Valmiki), Saar Kand (Chapter 1), Sarga (Canto) 13, verse nos. 78-82.

Why did Ravana decide to take the risk of putting his other son Meghnad to danger even after learning of the ferocity of Hanuman? It was because he was convinced of Meghnad’s strength, powers and abilities. It was Meghnad who had freed him from the captivity of Indra, the king of Gods, which was surely not an easy task. In Valmiki Ramayan, Sundar Kand, Canto 48, verse no. 6, Ravana praises Meghnad as follows: “Oh son. You are like me in the powers derived by Tapa (doing penances and austerities), in the physical strength of the body, in valour and courage, in skill with weapons and force of arms, and in the art of warfare. When I feel myself in danger in the battle-field, then at that time as soon as I remember you I feel encouraged and reassured of victory; all my worries and distresses vanish.’

Ravana was absolutely convinced that Meghnad could capture anyone he wishes, even the mighty gods are no match against him: refer—Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-3 that precede Doha no. 182.

Another interesting thing is that amongst all the demon warriors, it was only Meghnad who could roar loudly and deafeningly like the clap of thunder. The soldiers who had come back to report of the devastation caused by Hanuman and about his powers must have also reported that the latter roars thunderously like a giant. So therefore, Ravana thought he should send someone who can also roar equally

thunderously and was equally powerful and strong so as to show the intruder that he has his match in Lanka. And the only one demon warrior Ravana could think of who could challenge Hanuman was Meghand.

Why did Ravana ordered Meghnad not to kill the intruder but only tie him up and bring him to the court? Obviously it is because Ravana wished to learn more about the lord or the master on whose orders Hanuman had come to Lanka; if he was killed then no further information would be available about the principle enemy. If the intruder is caught alive then certainly a lot of information can be extracted from him about the enemy, and consequently defenses can be fine tuned and offensive strategy can be formulated in case there is an actual confrontation.]

चला इंद्रजित अतुलित जोधा । बंधु निधन सुनि उपजा क्रोधा ॥ ३ ॥
कपि देखा दारुन भट आवा । कटकटाइ गर्जा अरु धावा ॥ ४ ॥

calā indrajita atulita jōdhā. bandhu nidhana suni upajā krōdhā. 3.
kapi dēkhā dārūna bhaṭa āvā. kaṭakaṭā'i garjā aru dhāvā. 4.

The great warrior (Meghanad) who was peerless in strength and valour, and who once had even vanquished Indra, the king of the gods, proceeded very angrily to face Hanuman when he learnt that his brother (Akshayakumar) had been killed. (3)

When the Kapi (Hanuman) observed that a mighty warrior is approaching him menacingly, he too became angry, and he dashed forward immediately¹, gnashing his teeth violently and roaring thunderously. (4)

[Note—¹This shows that Hanuman did not hesitate even for a moment when he saw Meghnad coming to confront him. It proves that Hanuman was bold and fearless; he was very confident of his own abilities, and was sure that no harm could ever come to him due to the grace of Lord Ram.]

अति बिसाल तरु एक उपारा । बिरथ कीन्ह लंकेस कुमारा ॥ ५ ॥
रहे महाभट ताके संगी । गहि गहि कपि मर्दइ निज अंगा ॥ ६ ॥
तिन्हहि निपाति ताहि सन बाजा । भिरे जुगल मानहुँ गजराजा ॥ ७ ॥
मुठिका मारि चढ़ा तरु जाई । ताहि एक छन मुरुछा आई ॥ ८ ॥
उठि बहोरि कीन्हिसि बहु माया । जीति न जाइ प्रभंजन जाया ॥ ९ ॥

ati bisāla taru ēka upārā. biratha kīnha laṅkēsa kumārā. 5.
rahē mahābhaṭa tākē saṅgā. gahi gahi kapi marda'i nija aṅgā. 6.
tinahi nipāti tāhi sana bājā. bhirē jugala mānahum' gajarājā. 7.
muṭhikā māri caṛhā taru jā'ī. tāhi ēka chana muruchā ā'ī. 8.
uṭhi bahōri kīnhisi bahu māyā. jīti na jā'ī prabhañjana jāyā. 9.

He (Hanuman) uprooted a huge tree and slammed the Prince of Lanka (Meghnad) with it, as a result of which the latter fell down from his chariot. (5)

All the great demon warriors who had accompanied the prince were seized by Hanuman one by one, who thrashed them ferociously and then squashed them against his body, reducing them to a pulp. (6)

After decimating the demon warriors, he (Hanuman) engaged the prince (Meghnad) in a duel—the sight of the two mighty warriors engaged in close hand-to-hand combat gave the impression of two great elephants angrily entangled with each other. (7)

Then Hanuman hit Meghnad fiercely with his fist, and then jumped onto a tree; this punch left the latter reeling, and he fainted for a moment. (8)

When he (Meghnad) regained his consciousness, he employed many tricks of delusive nature (i.e. many magical charms in which he was an expert)¹, but no matter how hard he tried the son of the wind god (“prabhanjāna jāyā”; Hanuman) could not be subdued by him. (9)

[Note—¹The fistful that Meghnad suffered from Hanuman was too much for him. He was so rattled by it that he decided that he should best avoid a direct confrontation with his enemy, and so he engaged in an indirect attack on Hanuman by employing certain magical tricks in which he was an expert. Yet, inspite of all his maneuverings and deceptions, Meghnad could not overcome Hanuman who always outwitted him.]

दो०. ब्रह्म अज तेहिं साँधा कपि मन कीन्ह बिचार ।

जौं न ब्रह्मसर मानउँ महिमा मिटइ अपार ॥ १९ ॥

dōhā.

brahma astra tēhim sām̐dhā kapi mana kīnha bicāra.
jaur̐ na brahmasara māna'um̐ mahimā miṭa'i apāra. 19.

Frustrated and peeved, Meghnad at last aimed the infallible weapon known as ‘Brahma Astra’¹ at the Kapi (Hanuman).

At this, Hanuman thought within himself, ‘If I do not yield to this weapon then it would undermine the authority and the glory of the creator Brahma as this weapon is sanctified and empowered by invoking Brahma’s name.

[To wit therefore, I must submit myself to it, though if I wish I can easily defy it. But if I nullify this weapon of Brahma like I have been neutralizing all other weapons used by Meghnad, it will set a bad precedent, and it would be tantamount to insulting the authority and the powers of the Creator, which I must not do at all. Hence, it is proper for me to submit voluntarily before this weapon to show respect to Brahma. Besides, this will give me an opportunity to come face to face with Ravana in his court; it will help me to see many other things, such as the way he and his court function. It will also help me to get a direct idea of his army, its strengths and weapons, as it is sure that I will have to ultimately face them when I decide to free myself from this snare. So actually this Brahma’s weapon is a god-sent opportunity for me to make more investigations about the demon army and its preparedness.]’ (Doha no. 19)

[Note—¹Brahma-Astra is like an arrow or a missile. It is literally a weapon that cannot fail as it is used by invoking the powers of the creator Brahma.]

चौ०. ब्रह्मबान कपि कहूँ तेहिं मारा । परतिहूँ बार कटकु संघारा ॥ १ ॥
तेहिं देखा कपि मुरुछित भयऊ । नागपास बाँधेसि लै गयऊ ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

brahmabāna kapi kahum̐ tēhim̐ mārā. paratihum̐ bāra kaṭaku saṅghārā. 1.
tēhim̐ dēkhā kapi muruchita bhaya'ū. nāgapāsa bām̐dhēsi lai gaya'ū. 2.

He (Meghnad) finally shot the Kapi (Hanuman) with Brahma's arrow (or the arrow empowered by invoking Brahma's powers; "brahmabāna"). Even as he fell, Hanuman slayed as many demon warriors as he could lay his hands on. (1)

When he (Meghnad) saw that the Kapi was unconscious, he (gathered courage to go near him and)¹ tied the latter in a snare consisting of snakes (nāgapāsa)² and then took him as a captive (to the court of Ravana). (2)

[Note—¹Meghnad was so terrified of Hanuman that he could not gather courage to approach him till he was certain that the latter was unconscious.

Once when Meghnad had taken Indra as a captive, the creator Brahma had gone to plead for his freedom, and at that time he had given his own weapon, known as 'Brahma Astra', to Meghnad in return of Indra's freedom.

The 'Naag-pash' or the serpent-snare was given to Meghnad by Varun, the god of water.]

जासु नाम जपि सुनुहु भवानी । भव बंधन काटहिं नर ग्यानी ॥ ३ ॥
तासु दूत कि बंध तरु आवा । प्रभु कारज लागि कपिहिं बँधावा ॥ ४ ॥

jāsu nāma japi sunahu bhavānī. bhava bandhana kāṭahim̐ nara gyānī. 3.
tāsu dūta ki bandha taru āvā. prabhu kāraja lagi kapihim̐ bam̐dhāvā. 4.

Expressing his amazement at this singular event, as well as to explain it, Lord Shiva, the primary narrator of this magnificent story, told his consort Parvati, who is also known as Bhavani, 'Listen Bhavani. The Lord (i.e. Sri Ram), by repeating whose holy name wise men are able to cut through the formidable snare represented by the cycle of transmigration, and thereby attain freedom from all misery [3]—is it ever possible that the messenger of the same Lord can be captured by any kind of worldly snare? No, it is impossible; it is only for the purpose of serving the Lord's cause that the Kapi (Hanuman) had voluntarily allowed himself to be caught in this 'serpent-snare' [4]'. (3-4)

[Note—As we have already read in Doha no. 19 herein above, Hanuman decided to surrender himself before Brahma's weapon voluntarily so as to maintain its sanctity.

But what about the 'Naag-pash'? We shall read soon that Hanuman freed himself easily from this serpent-snare at the right moment when he decided to do so;

he simply reduced the size of his body, which helped to loosen the grip of the snare from which he set himself free by slithering out of it—refer: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 25.

But till that time arrived he decided to remain ensnared. It helped him to go to Ravana's court unopposed; it helped him to have sneak view of the city as he was being taken to the court through its streets, as well as the entrances to the royal palaces of Ravana while he passed through them; it helped him see the general populace of Lanka and judge its mood; it helped him to see the ministers and the commanders of the demon army who gathered in the court to attend the spectacle of his interview with Ravana. All this would go to serve the interest of the Lord's army when the assault will finally be launched, and help the Lord and his commanders to plan their war strategy.

Hanuman had received a number of boons from different Gods during his early childhood; these are enumerated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto 36. Amongst these boons were two that are relevant here—the one granted by the creator Brahma, and the other by Varun, the god of water.

Brahma had blessed Hanuman that none of his weapons, called the Brahma Astra, would ever be able to kill him (refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto 36, verse no. 21); and Varun had blessed him that he would be immune to his snare, known as the Naag Pash, as well as any harm that may come from the water element (refer: Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto 36, verse no. 15).

This is the reason why Hanuman had no fear of the mighty ocean while crossing it, and neither was he even whit worried when Meghnad shot the Brahma-Astra at him nor when he was tied by the Naag-Pash—because he knew that he was immune to their harmful effects.

So it means that when Meghnad hit Hanuman with the Brahma-Astra, the latter only feigned fainting as a gesture of surrender to the might of Brahma's weapon and to show honour and respect to the Creator. Similar was the case with the Naag-Pash; Hanuman simply wanted to show respect to Varun, the god of water, by pretending to be tied with this snare. As we have observed earlier, it was a strategic move by him so that he can find more details about Lanka, about Ravana and his ministers, and about the demon army and its commanders.

Now therefore, we come to another interesting conclusion here that would answer the question 'how did Meghnad carry Hanuman to Ravana's court? After Meghnad succeeded in subduing Hanuman with the Brahma-Astra and then tying him up with the Naag-Pash, he did not have to carry Hanuman to Ravana's court on a stretcher or a hammock or by any other means that are usually employed to carry unconscious persons, for Hanuman was fully conscious and could easily walk along on his two legs like a captive tied in ropes and being led to the king. As he and his captors wound their way through the streets of Lanka, a huge crowd of excited and curious demon burghers collected and followed them, as it was a spectacle never witnessed earlier. Hanuman was teased and jeered at; he was pushed and shoved; but he kept his cool for the time being, deciding that he would punish his tormentors when the right time came. And so it was that he decided to burn Lanka later on as a severe punishment for its rude, impolite and irreverent inhabitants.

The terror that Hanuman had struck in the psyche of the demons was so severe indeed that later on when Angad, whom we would recognize as being the prince of the monkeys and the commander of the little group to which Hanuman belonged and was sent in the south direction in search of Sita, was sent by Lord Ram as his emissary to the court of Ravana before the war commenced in an attempt to make

truce and avoid a bloody war, there was panic in the city as soon as Angad reached there. He was shown respect by the demon citizens; every demon whom he met was too willing to oblige him by showing him the way to Ravana's palace; no one dared to joke at him or report to the demon army about his arrival. We shall read about it in due course. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19.}}

कपि बंधन सुनि निसिचर धाए । कौतुक लागि सभाँ सब आए ॥ ५ ॥
 दसमुख सभा दीखि कपि जाई । कहि न जाइ कछु अति प्रभुताई ॥ ६ ॥
 कर जोरें सुर दिसिप बिनीता । भृकुटि बिलोकत सकल सभीता ॥ ७ ॥
 देखि प्रताप न कपि मन संका । जिमि अहिगन महुँ गरुड़ असंका ॥ ८ ॥

kapi bandhana suni niscara dhā'ē. kautuka lāgi sabhām̐ saba ā'ē. 5.
 dasamukha sabhā dīkhi kapi jā'ī. kahi na jā'i kachu ati prabhutā'ī. 6.
 kara jōrēm sura disipa binītā. bhṛkuṭi bilōkata sakala sabhītā. 7.
 dēkhi pratāpa na kapi mana saṅkā. jimi ahigana mahum̐ garuṛa asaṅkā. 8.

When the demons heard that the ferocious Kapi (Hanuman) had been subdued and tied¹, everyone dashed forward with great curiosity to watch the spectacle, and a huge crowd collected in the royal court of Ravana. (5)

The Kapi saw the royal court of the ten-headed Ravana; he was amazed at its magnificence and glory, for it was so great and fascinating that it cannot be described in words. [To wit, Hanuman was exceedingly charmed by the sight of Ravana's majesty and opulence; he had never seen such a sight earlier, so he was lost for words.] (6)

[And what did he behold?] He observed that the great gods and the many custodians of the different directions (sura disipa) were all politely standing in attention and in a submissive way with clasped hands before Ravana; they were anxiously watching his eyebrows (or face) in order to perceive his subtle emotions, to judge whether Ravana is favourable towards them or not. (7)

Inspite of witnessing such a show of majesty, power and authority on the part of Ravana, there was no trace of disturbance, fear or apprehension in the Kapi (Hanuman); it was like the case of Garud (the king of birds) remaining fearless in the midst of serpents². [To wit, just like Garud has no fear from serpents because the former can easily gobble up the latter, Hanuman too remain unmoved by the sight of so many ferocious demons around him. The presence of Ravana had instilled fear in the hearts of gods and demi-gods, but Hanuman was unbothered.] (8)

[Note—¹The demons had been so terrified that they had remained hidden while Hanuman had gone on the rampage in the Ashok garden, killing and wounding a large number of demon soldiers. The terror became more marked after the killing of Akshayakumar; and it was further aggravated when Hanuman had fiercely beaten Meghnad, and made him faint and fall from his chariot. Now when this ferocious

intruder was captured and tied, the demon citizens came out of hiding and rushed to the site to watch the drama unfold.

²Garud, the king of birds, is the legendary mount of Lord Vishnu; he is said to be an eternal enemy of the serpents upon whom he feeds. So Garud is not at all afraid of the serpents; the serpents on the contrary are terrified of him.

Similarly, Hanuman was not at all afraid of either Ravana or any other demon warriors; rather it were the demons who were sore affright of him.]

दो०. कपिहि बिलोकि दसानन बिहसा कहि दुर्बाद ।

सुत बध सुरति कीन्हि पुनि उपजा हृदयँ बिषाद ॥ २० ॥

dōhā.

kapihi bilōki dasānana bihasā kahi durbāda.

suta badha surati kīnhi puni upajā hṛdayam̐ biṣāda. 20.

When the ten-headed Ravana saw the Kapi (Hanuman), he laughed aloud and said many insulting things. But soon he became sober and his heart turned gloomy when he remembered the death of his son (Akshayakumar). (Doha no. 20)

[Note—In the beginning Ravana made a lot of fun of Hanuman; but he soon realised that it was the same Hanuman who had killed his own son Akshayakumar. As we have read, a huge crowd had gathered in the court to observe the proceedings. So Ravana immediately realised his folly—he was joking at the strength and ability of the captive now that the latter was tied up in the Naag-Pash, forgetting that this same captive had a little while ago killed Akshayakumar, the prince of Lanka. It made Ravana look ridiculous in the eyes of his subjects. He was laughing and cracking nasty jokes instead of showing anger at the killer of his son.

Hence, Ravana immediately changed tack and corrected himself; instead of laughing and joking at Hanuman he developed a somber and serious mood.]

चौ०. कह लंकेस कवन तैं कीसा । केहि कें बल घालेहि बन खीसा ॥ १ ॥

की धौं श्रवन सुनेहि नहिं मोही । देखउँ अति असंक सठ तोही ॥ २ ॥

मारे निसिचर केहिं अपराधा । कहु सठ तोहि न प्रान कइ बाधा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

kaha laṅkēsa kavana tair̥m kīsā. kēhi kēm bala ghālēhi bana khīsā. 1.

kī dhaur̥m śravana sunēhi nahir̥m mōhī. dēkha'um̐ ati asaṅka saṭha tōhī. 2.

mārē niscara kēhir̥m aparādhā. kahu saṭha tōhi na prāna ka'i bādhā. 3.

The king of Lanka (Ravana) asked Hanuman angrily, 'Say Kapi, who art thou, and on whose strength have thee laid the garden to ruin? [To wit, from whence have thee come, and on whose instructions have thou destroyed my magnificent grove; tell me who art thou.]¹ (1)

Oh thy wicked fellow! Have thou never heard of my name? I observe thee to be exceptionally bold and fearless. [To wit, my name is sufficient to send shivers down the spine of the bravest of warriors, and the boldest of creatures tremble in their knees when they hear of mine name. But I find that thou art haughtily standing before me; how is it ever possible?] (2)

For what crime have thee killed the demons², thou wretch? Aren't thou afraid of thy life?' (3)

[Note—¹This question clearly proves that Lankini, the female demon guard who first encountered Hanuman at the gate of the fort when he was trying to get into the city at night, and who had suffered severely when Hanuman hit her hard with his closed fist, making her bleed in the nose, had decided to keep mum, and had not reported the intrusion to her seniors. The reason she gave at the time was her premonition of the impending elimination of the demon race led by Ravana as it was prophesized by the creator Brahma that when she is hit so hard by someone that she virtually faints then she must realize that the end of the demons was near. So Lankini had blessed Hanuman with success instead of reporting about him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 4—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 5.}

Besides her conviction that the end of the demons was near as it was Brahma's prophesy that cannot be negated, there was one other important reason why she kept quiet about an enemy's spy entering the city. She feared severe punishment for negligence and letting Hanuman in; she was appointed to guard the gates of the fort after due diligence about her abilities and with the full confidence that she had the ability to defend it from any intruder whosoever he might be. She had herself asserted this when she first challenged Hanuman, saying that she feeds on thieves and intruders. {Refer specifically to Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 4.}

To wit, till this point Ravana and his military commanders were totally in the dark about Hanuman's entry into the city. They were caught unawares and were so preoccupied about the turmoil created by Hanuman's presence that none of them thought of interrogating Lankini. By the grace of the Lord she escaped scrutiny and perhaps death, and it was because she had served the cause of the Lord.

²Ravana was a great diplomat and politician. He did not ask why Hanuman had killed his son Akshayakumar, but he showed anger about the death of the demon warriors in general. This was primarily meant for the huge crowd of spectators who had assembled to watch the spectacle: Ravana wished to gain their loyalty and praise by showing that he was more concerned about the death of his soldiers than the loss of his own son.]

सुनु रावन ब्रह्मांड निकाया । पाइ जासु बल बिरचति माया ॥ ४ ॥

जाके बल बिरंचि हरि ईसा । पालत सृजत हरत दससीसा ॥ ५ ॥

जा बल सीस धरत सहसानन । अंडकोस समेत गिरि कानन ॥ ६ ॥

धरइ जो बिबिध देह सुरत्राता । तुम्ह से सठन्ह सिखावनु दाता ॥ ७ ॥

हर कोदंड कठिन जेहिं भंजा । तेहि समेत नृप दल मद गंजा ॥ ८ ॥

खर दूषन त्रिसिरा अरु बाली । बधे सकल अतुलित बलसाली ॥ ९ ॥

sunu rāvana brahmāṇḍa nikāyā. pā'i jāsu bala biracati māyā. 4.
jākēm bala birañci hari īsā. pālata sṛjata harata dasasīsā. 5.
jā bala sīsa dharata sahasānana. aṇḍakōsa samēta giri kānana. 6.
dhara'i jō bibidha dēha suratrātā. tumha sē saṭhanha sikhāvanu dātā. 7.
hara kōdaṇḍa kaṭhina jēhim bhañjā. tēhi samēta nṛpa dala mada gañjā. 8.
khara dūṣana trisirā aru bālī. badhē sakala atulita balasālī. 9.

{In the following verses, Hanuman lists the glories of Lord Ram as an answer to Ravana's first query "who are you and on whose orders have you come here". Hanuman tells Ravana that he is a servant of the Lord whose glories he is enumerating; this is his credential, and the Lord referred to here is his strength and authority.}

[Hanuman replied—] 'Listen Ravana. He (i.e. the Supreme Being) on whose strength and authority countless universes are created by Maya (the delusion creating powers of the Supreme Being that combine with the creative powers of Mother Nature to create a kaleidoscope of diverse universes) (4), ---

Oh the ten-headed one (Ravana)! He on whose strength and authority the Trinity Gods known as Brahma, Hari and Isha (Shiva) are able to create, nourish and sustain, and bring to an end this creation (5), ---

He on whose strength and authority the thousand-hooded celestial Serpent (known as Seshnath) is able to hold on his hood the entire egg-like creation that consists of huge mountains and forests (6), ---

It is the same Lord (the Supreme Being) who assumes different forms (bodies) to protect the interests of the Gods, and to teach a lesson to those who are stupid and wicked like you. (7)

It is the same Lord (in the form of Lord Ram) who had broken the formidable Bow of Lord Shiva, and had thereby vanquished the pride and ego of haughty kings, including yourself¹. (8)

It is he who had slayed the mighty warriors such as Khar, Dushan, Trishira² and Baali³, all of whom were matchless in strength and valour. (9)

[Note—¹This refers to Lord Ram breaking Lord Shiva's Bow at Janakpur to marry Sita. All the great kings and princes of the time had assembled there to try their luck, but none of them had been able to even move the Bow an inch. Even Ravana was there, but fearing certain humiliation he had quietly left the place. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 249—to Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 252; (ii) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 260—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 262.}

²Khar, Dushan and Trishira were slayed by Lord Ram when they and their army of demons had attacked him at the behest of Supernakha. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.}

³Baali was the elder brother of Sugriv, the prince of the monkey kingdom. Lord Ram was instrumental in his death as the Lord felt that Baali had done grave injustice to his younger brother Sugriv, and needed punishment. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 11.}}

दो०. जाके बल लवलेस तें जितेहु चराचर झारि।

तासु दूत मैं जा करि हरि आनेहु प्रिय नारि ॥ २१ ॥

dōhā.

jākē bala lavalēsa tēm jītēhu carācara jhāri.
tāsu dūta mair̥m jā kari hari ānēhu priya nāri. 21.

By the miniscule fraction of whose strength you were able to conquer the entire creation consisting of animate and inanimate things, and whose beloved wife you had stolen, know me to be a messenger of that Lord¹! (Doha no. 21)

[Note—¹Till this point Hanuman had referred to the Supreme Being as the glories he has enumerated belong to that Supreme Being. But finally he disclosed that the Supreme Lord he is referring to is none other but Lord Ram—because it was his wife Sita whom Ravana had abducted.]

चौ०. जानउँ मैं तुम्हारि प्रभुताई । सहसबाहु सन परी लराई ॥ १ ॥

समर बालि सन करि जसु पावा । सुनि कपि बचन बिहसि बिहरावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jāna'um̐ mair̥m tumhāri prabhutāī. sahasabāhu sana parī larāī. 1.
samara bāli sana kari jasu pāvā. suni kapi bacana bihasi biharāvā. 2.

{Now, Hanuman answers the second query of Ravana: “Does Hanuman not know who Ravana was that he fails to show any deference to him; has he not heard of Ravana’s name that he seems not to tremble in fear in the latter’s presence?” Hanuman’s answer is in the form of an insult to Ravana’s self-respect and honour; it is an insinuation that invokes certain unfortunate incidents that show Ravana in a very poor light. Remember: There is a large gathering of courtiers and demon burghers who are watching the proceedings attentively. This stern public rebuke by Hanuman might have shuddered the faint-hearted, but made others smile in sarcasm as every demon was aware of these circumstances, though no one actually spoke of them out of fear of his life.}

[Hanuman continued—] ‘Oh yes, as to your majesty, strength and abilities of which you are so proud, I am indeed aware of them, for I am in the know of your duel with Sahastrabahu¹! [Hanuman has taunted Ravana by citing this incident because he was

defeated and captured by Sahastrabahu in a battle over a trifle matter as narrated in a note below. Sahastrabhu kept Ravana as an ordinary prisoner-of-war till sage Pulastya went and freed him.] (1)

And of course, you have achieved great glory by having a duel with Baali (the king of the monkey race and the ruler of the kingdom of Kishkindha)²! [This was another incident where Ravana was subjected to great humiliation as narrated in a note below. He was captured and tucked under armpit by Baali, where Ravana remained stuck for quite a long time before Baali realized that someone was there. Ravana fell to the ground when Baali raised his arms.]'

When Ravana heard these taunting words of the Kapi (Hanuman), he tried to hide his severe embarrassment and deflect attention that was now focused on his weaknesses by laughing the matter away, pretending that it was of no consequence to him whatsoever. (2)

[Note—¹Sahastrabahu, literally means 'one with a thousand arms'; he was also known as 'Sahararjun', i.e. Arjun with a thousand arms.

The story of Sahastrabahu and how Ravana was humiliated by him is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 55-57; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 90-95.

Briefly it is as follows: Sahastrabahu was the son of Kritvirya and the king of Mahishmati situated on the banks of river Narmada. By the blessings of sage Dattatreya he could get a thousand arms when he so desired. One day when he was enjoying himself with his ladies and mistresses in the river, Ravana had too gone there to offer worship to Lord Shiva. Ravana's attendants had collected flowers for offering to Lord Shiva. In the meantime, Sahatrabahu, who was showing off his majesty to impress the women, had used his thousand arms to block the flow of water in the river, which therefore flooded the banks and flowed upstream. The flowers that Ravana's attendants had collected for worship were washed away, which gravely annoyed Ravana as it disrupted his worship. On learning the cause of this flood, Ravana immediately went to challenge Sahastrabahu and started a fierce battle with his soldiers. Upon learning that Ravana has destroyed the entire army, Sahastrabahu himself came to face him. A severe battle ensued. As soon as the chief commander of the demon army, named Prahasta, fell, the rest of the demons fled; and then followed a one-to-one duel between Ravana and Sahastrabahu. These two mighty warriors used massive war-maces to hit each other. Finally, Sahastrabahu hit Ravana so hard that he tottered and swooned, and was so dazed that he sat down to recover himself. Seizing the moment, Sahastrabahu captured Ravana and held him tight in his thousand arms, using these arms like ropes to ensnare him so firmly that Ravana could not wriggle out. After this, Sahastrabahu brought Ravana to his capital city and imprisoned him like an ordinary prisoner of war. Later on, sage Pulastya went to plead with Sahastrabahu, and he not only succeeded in getting Ravana released but also in forging a friendship between the two. {This version is according to Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto nos. 31-33.}

The version according to Anand Ramayan and Adhyatma Ramayan has already been narrated in our Book earlier.

A word or two about Sahatrabahu would make this story more interesting. So let us read a little more about him as follows:

There was once a thousand-armed Kshatriya (warrior class) king known as 'Sahastraarjun' or 'Arjun with a thousand hands'. He was the son of king Kritvirya whose kingdom was known as Anup; its capital city was known as Maahismati and it was situated on the southern bank of river Narmada.

In his early life he was a very righteous and conscientious person, a man of upright thoughts and noble conduct. After the death of his father when the court ministers wished to anoint him on the throne of the kingdom, he refused, saying: 'Kingdom leads a king to hell if he cannot live upto the expectations of his subjects and rule according to the principles of Dharma (righteousness and probity). The main source of income of a king is 'tax collected from his subjects', but if this tax is collected in an improper way, and if it is not utilized for the welfare of the subjects of the kingdom in accordance with the principles of Dharma which say that the main use of state revenue is to ensure that traders are given all facilities and protection for carrying out legitimate trade, are not looted by thieves, the subjects of the kingdom are given due protection and their interests are always kept ahead of everything else, and so on and so forth. So unless I acquire such powers and abilities by doing Tapa (penance), I will not accept the throne.'

When Sahastrabahu said this, the great sage Garg advised him that if he indeed wishes to do Tapa and acquire mythical powers to rule the vast kingdom in accordance to Dharma then he should go and serve Lord Dattatreya, an incarnation of Lord Vishnu. Dattatreya lived in a cave of Mt. SahyaParvat and did Tapa there (Markandeya Puran, Canto 18). So, Sahastrabahu went to Lord Dattatreya and began serving him diligently for a long period of ten thousand years.

According to Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12, when Dattatreya was pleased with his service and austerities, he granted him four boons: (i) First, the king asked for one thousand arms. (ii) Second, he wished that no one in his kingdom would even dare to think in an unrighteous and sinful way. (iii) Third, he wanted to conquer the whole earth and rule over it. (iv) Fourth, that if he has to die then it must be in the battle-field at the hands of a warrior who is superior to him in every way.

According to Markandey Puran, Canto 18, verse nos. 14-18, the king was granted ten boons as follows: (i) The powers and authority to rule over his subjects without acquiring sins. (ii) The ability to know the thoughts of others. (iii) No one should be able to face him in the battle-field (i.e. he should become invincible). (iv) During a war he should have a thousand arms so as to fight his opponent with all of them at once. [This is also mentioned in Harivansha Puran, Canto 33, verse no. 14.] (v) He should have unhindered access to all places in the sky, water, earth, mountains and the nether world. (vi) If he has to die then it should be at the hands of someone stronger than him. (vii) If by chance he goes astray and falls on the wrong path, then he must have a chance to get good advice and company of saintly persons (i.e. he must be given an opportunity to mend his ways). (viii) He must have illustrious persons as his guests so that he can serve them and get their blessings. (ix) His wealth should never diminish even after liberal charities and giving of alms regularly; there should be no shortage of wealth in his kingdom. (x) The virtue of Bhakti (having devotion for Lord God) should be firm and perpetual in him.

In Mahabharat, Van Parva, Canto 115, verse no. 12, it is said that by the grace of Dattatreya the king acquired an air-plane made of gold; that he ruled over the entire earth; and that no one could stop his chariot. He was a great Emperor who conquered the whole world and made liberal charities. He is also regarded as a great scholar of Tantra Shastra.

He was so powerful and mighty that when he bathed in the ocean and thrashed it with his thousand arms, he could turn the tide backwards. He would splash the water so heavily that marine creatures were tossed into the air like ninepins. [Brahm-Vaivarta Puran, Ganesh Khand, Canto 23-27.]

But the Laws of Creation are such that every good thing has to come to an end one day; nothing is eternal and permanent in this mortal gross world. This also applied to Sahastrabahu. As time passed, he became extremely haughty and cruel. He started subjugating even the Gods so as to remove all challenges to his authority and power. It is said that he ruled for eighty-five thousand years before he was killed by sage Parashuram.

Once he was asked by the Fire God for alms, and the noble king could not refuse. The Fire God used this grant to burn everything and cause havoc everywhere, because he was certain that Sahastrabahu would not stop him. During this burning spree, the Fire destroyed the hermitage of sage Aapava (who was later on known as sage Vasistha according to Brahm Puran during its description of the race of Yayaati). The sage cursed king Sahastrabahu that his arms, relying upon whose strength the Fire God had destroyed his hermitage and was wreaking havoc on earth, would be cut by sage Parashuram. [Refer: Mahabharat, Shanti Parva, Canto 49, verse nos. 35-45; and Padma Puran, Sristi Khand, Canto 12.]

One day, he was wandering along the shore of the ocean and out of his pride and haughtiness he covered it with thousands of arrows. The Ocean assumed a form and appeared before him to plead that he stop showering arrows into the water as all the marine creatures that live in the water would die. Sahastrabahu accepted the prayer but asked the Ocean to tell him about someone who could face him in battle, as he was itching for a face-off with anyone who could claim to be stronger than him as he wished to conquer the opponent and become an unchallenged warrior in this world. The Ocean told him to go sage Jamdagni whose son Parashuram would be fit opponent for him and would welcome him in battle. [Refer: Mahabharat, Ashwamegh Parva, Canto 29.]

Such was Sahastraarjun's sense of ego and pride that he could not bear that someone stronger be there on earth in his presence. So he collected his huge army and went to the hermitage of sage Jamdagni.

The sage duly welcomed the king and extended warm hospitality to him. Sahastraarjun was however astonished at the lavish way the forest-dwelling hermit had entertained him. So he wanted to know the reason. Upon finding out that the sage managed to do this miracle because he possessed a divine cow known as 'Kamdhenu' or Kapila cow which could produce anything desired in an instant, the greedy king was filled with jealousy. Driven by avarice and rapacity, he demanded that the sage give this cow to him. Obviously Jamdagni refused. So the king forcefully snatched the cow from him and in the ensuing tussle he killed Jamdagni.

At that time, Jamdagni's brave son Parashuram was not there. When he returned, home he found his mother grieving. Coming to know of the reason, he immediately took the vow that he will eliminate all the Kshatriya kings from the surface of the earth by killing all of them. His mother had beaten her chest twenty-one times as a sign of mourning, so he declared that he will continue to wipe out the Kshatriya kings for an equal number of times, i.e. for twenty-one generations.

He comforted his mother and attacked Sahastraarjun, severed all his thousand arms with his battle-axe and then killed him. [This story is narrated in Mahabharat, Ashwamegha Parva, Canto 29.]

Extremely peeved by the Kshatriya race to which this king belonged, Parashuram vowed to eliminate the entire race from the surface of the earth as a revenge for the killing of his father. This was the reason why Parashuram had fought and killed thousands of Kshatriya to avenge the killing of his father by Sahastraarjun.

²The story of Baali, the king of the Kishkindha and of the monkey race, and how Ravana suffered humiliation at his hand is narrated in Valmiki's Ramayana, Uttar Kand, Canto no. 34; Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Uttar Kand, Canto 2, verse nos. 58-59; and in Anand Ramayan, Sarkand, Canto 13, verse nos. 96-101.

The story in brief is this: Once, the monkey king of Kishkindha, Baali, had put Ravana under his armpit for many days while the latter had gone to challenge the former when he was doing some worship. Peeved by Ravana's arrogance and impertinence, Baali had tucked him under his arms to stop him from annoying him any further. When his worship was finished and he had returned back to his capital at Kishkindha, he realised that Ravana was still squeezed under his armpit. So he released the latter and made a pact of friendship with him. Mandodari refers to that incident when Ravana had tried his best to escape from Baali but could not do so, and remained clamped and squeezed under his armpit for a long time.]

खायउँ फल प्रभु लागी भूँखा । कपि सुभाव तें तोरेउँ रूखा ॥ ३ ॥

सब कें देह परम प्रिय स्वामी । मारहिं मोहि कुमारग गामी ॥ ४ ॥

जिन्ह मोहि मारा ते मैं मारे । तेहि पर बाँधेउँ तनयँ तुम्हारे ॥ ५ ॥

मोहि न कछु बाँधे कइ लाजा । कीन्ह चहउँ निज प्रभु कर काजा ॥ ६ ॥

khāya'um' phala prabhu lāgī bhūm'khā. kapi subhāva tēm tōrē'um' rūkhā. 3.
saba kēm dēha parama priya svāmī. mārāhīm mōhi kumārāga gāmī. 4.
jinha mōhi mārā tē mair mārē. tēhi para bām'dhē'um' tanayam' tumhārē. 5.
mōhi na kachu bām'dhē ka'i lājā. kīnha caha'um' nija prabhu kara kājā. 6.

{Hanuman now answers the third query of Ravana: "Why did he slay so many demon soldiers; what was their fault?"}

Lord¹, I was hungry and so partook of fruits, and as is the habit of our race of monkeys I broke the branches and fell the raw fruits. (3)

Oh Lord, everyone loves his body and no one wants any harm to come to it. But these sinful fellows who follow the wrong path (kumārāga gāmī) began attacking and hitting me (for such a trifling issue, not realizing that I was hungry and was breaking the trees and felling the fruits not out of any bad intentions but because it is my wont as a monkey to do so). (4)

I hit back only those who attacked me (and I did not hit anyone who desisted from hitting me). In spite of this, your son (Meghnad) has tied me (as if I was a criminal). (5)

But I am not ashamed of being captured or tied; my only aim is that I wish to do my Lord's work, and do it with diligence and honesty². (6)

[Note—¹Hanuman shows his diplomatic acumen here. He has already shown to Ravana as well as the rest of the demons how bold and brave he was, so now he plays the diplomatic card of politeness and respect that a messenger from a great king ought to show to another great king to whose court his lord has sent him with a commission. This single word “lord” shot down in one stroke the accusation of being haughty, arrogant and irreverent that Ravana had made on Hanuman.

²Hanuman did not divulge what his ‘Lord’s work’ was. He left it to the common sense of Ravana and his ministers. He has already hinted to Ravana that he is a messenger of Lord Ram whose wife Sita has been abducted by him (Ravana). So if Ravana had even a rudimentary intelligence he would know what Hanuman’s objective was in coming to Lanka, and what the work was that his Lord had assigned to him.

In spite of these hints and warnings, Ravana could not mend his ways as he was overcome with delusions that usually overcome someone who is on the threshold of death as he fails to see the truth, and voluntarily falls in the trap.]

बिनती करउँ जोरि कर रावन । सुनहु मान तजि मोर सिखावन ॥ ७ ॥
 देखहु तुम्ह निज कुलहि बिचारी । भ्रम तजि भजहु भगत भय हारी ॥ ८ ॥
 जाकेँ डर अति काल डेराई । जो सुर असुर चराचर खाई ॥ ९ ॥
 तासों बयरु कबहुँ नहिं कीजै । मोरे कहें जानकी दीजै ॥ १० ॥

binatī kara'um̐ jōri kara rāvana. sunahu māna taji mōra sikhāvana. 7.
 dēkhahu tumha nija kulahi bicārī. bhrama taji bhajahu bhagata bhaya hārī. 8.
 jākēm ḍara ati kāla ḍērā'ī. jō sura asura carācara khā'ī. 9.
 tāsōm bayaru kabahum̐ nahim̐ kijai. mōrē kahēm̐ jānakī dījai. 10.

Oh Ravana, I pray to you with joined hands and beg you to pay heed to my advice. (7)

Look at your own exalted family (that traces its lineage to the great and illustrious sage Pulastya), and think over the matter in that perspective¹. You will do good to yourself by overcoming delusions, and instead of falling prey to haughtiness and false sense of pride and grandeur, you should worship the Lord who removes all fears of his devotees. (8)

He from whom even the Kaal—the god of death who devours the mighty gods, the demons as well as the rest of the creation consisting of animate creatures and inanimate things—is afraid [9], it is not at all wise to ever antagonize such a great and almighty Lord.

So therefore, pay heed to my words and listen to my advice by giving Janki (Sita) back to the Lord (Sri Ram). [By doing this you will safeguard yourself from all danger and forestall all chances of ruin and destruction that otherwise stare you in your face if you defy my advice. So be wise and prudent in this matter while there is still time, and avoid being rash as it will be to your own peril.] [9] (8-9)

[Note—¹Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 23 herein below where the same idea is reiterated by Hanuman.]

दो०. प्रनतपाल रघुनायक करुना सिंधु खरारि।

गाँ सरन प्रभु राखिहैं तव अपराध बिसारि ॥ २२ ॥

dōhā.

pranatapāla raghunāyaka karunā sindhu kharāri.
ga'ēm̐ sarana prabhu rākhihair̐ tava aparādha bisāri. 22.

The Lord of the Raghus (“raghunāyaka”; Lord Ram), who though had slayed the demon Khar (kharāri), is nevertheless like an ocean of compassion, mercy and kindness (karunā sindhu), for he protects and sustains all those who come with humility to submit themselves before him (pranatapāla)¹.

If you go to seek shelter in his feet and submit yourself before him, then the Lord will certainly oblige you, and forgive all your mistakes and offences². (Doha no. 22)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had slayed the demon Khar because he came to fight with him; had he come to seek the Lord’s mercy and blessings it sure that his wishes would have been granted. But killing of Khar does not mean that the Lord is merciless and cruel; the fact is that he is like an ‘ocean’ of mercy, grace, compassion, benevolence and kindness. To wit, just like an ocean has no dearth of water, Lord Ram too does not lack in these great virtues.

Here, Hanuman has subtly warned Ravana what fate he faces if he chooses to confront Lord Ram by reminding him of Khar. Khar, Dushan and Trishira were killed in the battle with Lord Ram, and this event is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 18—to Doha no. 20.

²Similar advice was given to Ravana on many occasions, but as ‘death’ had already cast its dark long shadow on him, he paid no attention to these pleadings.

First it was his wife Mandodari who tried her best to make Ravana see reason on different occasions—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 37; (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 8; (c) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 16; (d) Lanka Kand, Doha no. 35—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 38.

Then it was his brother Vibhishan who also tried to advice Ravana to return Sita and avoid a confrontation with Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Doha no. 39; and Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 40—to Doha no. 40.

The third instance is when Malyawanta, an old demon who was very wise and was Ravana’s minister, endorsed Vibhishan’s view, but he was sternly rebuked by Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, (a) Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 40; and (b) Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 48—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 49.

Once again, in the fourth instance, Kumbhakaran, Ravana’s other brother, also told him that he had committed a grave error by picking up a fight with Lord Ram—

refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62—to Doha no. 63.]

चौ०. राम चरन पंकज उर धरहू । लंका अचल राजु तुम्ह करहू ॥ १ ॥
 रिषि पुलस्ति जसु बिमल मयंका । तेहि ससि महुँ जनि होहु कलंका ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

rāma carana paṅkaja ura dharahū. laṅkā acala rāju tumha karahū. 1.
 riṣi pulasti jasu bimala mayāṅkā. tēhi sasi mahum̐ jani hōhu kalaṅkā. 2.

[Hanuman tried to convince Ravana to abandon animosity with Lord Ram and act wisely. He used many arguments in order to persuade Ravana to become sensible and mend his way while still there was time. So Hanuman advised Ravana as follows—]

Enshrine the holy feet of Lord Ram in your heart¹ and rule over the kingdom of Lanka without any obstacle for eternity.

[To wit, by submitting yourself before Lord Ram you will obtain his grace and protection, and once that is done, you will have no fear from any quarter. No one, whoever he may be or how mighty and powerful he might be, no one will ever dare to disturb you henceforth when it is known that you are being protected by Lord Ram, as the Lord is the Supreme Lord and Protector of this creation, and everyone, from the smallest to the mightiest, from the humblest of creatures to the greatest of gods, is under his jurisdiction. So once you are blessed by the almighty Lord, the only Supreme Emperor and Authority in this creation, no other authority or power will ever disturb you and try to snatch the kingdom from you. You would therefore rule over Lanka perpetually without worry and disturbance.] (1)

The fame and reputation of the illustrious sage Pulastya² is like a moon shining brilliantly with all its glorious radiance. Do not become a dark spot on the surface of this moon!

[Remember that you are a descendant of the great sage Pulastya. You must not do anything that would put to shame this exalted sage. You have a noble lineage and a great heritage to keep; so be mindful of it. Don't act rashly and irresponsibly for things that would surely lead to your ruin and cast a shadow of ignominy and ill-fame on your family.] (2)

[Note—¹Hanuman has already told Ravana that Lord Ram is none but the Supreme Being himself in a human form—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 21 herein above.

²Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 32 herein above where the same idea is expressed by Hanuman.]

राम नाम बिनु गिरा न सोहा । देखु बिचारि त्यागि मद मोहा ॥ ३ ॥
 बसन हीन नहिं सोह सुरारी । सब भूषन भूषित बर नारी ॥ ४ ॥

राम बिमुख संपति प्रभुताई । जाइ रही पाई बिनु पाई ॥ ५ ॥

rāma nāma binu girā na sōhā. dēkhu bicāri tyāgi mada mōhā. 3.
basana hīna nahim sōha surārī. saba bhūṣana bhūṣita bara nārī. 4.
rāma bimukha sampati prabhutā'ī. jā'i rahī pā'ī binu pā'ī. 5.

Without the holy name of 'Ram', one's speech and voice is never purified¹. Abandon ego and arrogance, and get rid of all delusions so that you can think properly, wisely and intelligently. (3)

Oh the enemy of gods (surārī; i.e. Ravana)! Even if a woman is richly adorned by all the wonderful ornaments one can think of, but if she does not wear her essential clothes and remains naked, then she does not deserve any praise; she looks dishonourable and unworthy of the ornaments. (4)

Similarly, for a person who is opposed to Lord Ram, all the wealth, prosperity, fame and good virtues that he possesses or would possess in future, are as good as his not having them at all². (5)

[Note—¹The name of the Lord, i.e. the word 'rāma', is regarded as a great 'Tarak Mantra', a special spiritual formula that grants liberation, deliverance, emancipation and salvation to the soul of the creature. This Mantra grants eternal beatitude, felicity and bliss to the creature. Its glory, importance and significance are expounded in the Upanishads, such as the Ram Tapini Upanishad and the Ram Rahasya Upanishad. No other Mantra other than the holy and the divine name of Lord Ram is honoured by the singular title of being a 'Tarak Mantra'.

Hanuman means that if a creature does not pronounce the name of Lord Ram, i.e. "rāma", then he will not be able to purify his tongue no matter which other Mantra he pronounces. To wit, the divine name of Lord Ram is so holy and exalted that is it like an Emperor of all Mantras. The faculty of speech and its manifested form as the voice of a creature acquires its glory and importance only when one pronounces the holy name of Lord Ram at least once with his tongue. Otherwise, one's tongue is merely a mass of muscles; one's voice is nothing better than the barking of a mad dog; and the faculty of speech feels dishonoured and insulted and disabled if the holy and purifying name of Lord Ram is not a part of its lexicon.

²Just like the case of a woman who does not get any respect by merely decorating herself by the choicest of jewelry and the costliest of ornaments if she does not wear proper clothes, for remaining naked is a vile thing for a self-respecting, dignified, honourable and chaste woman, being opposed to Lord Ram does not make a person honourable and worthy of respect even though he may have or is entitled to great fortunes, qualities and titles.]

सजल मूल जिन्ह सरितन्ह नाहीं । बरषि गएँ पुनि तबहिं सुखाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
सुनु दसकंठ कहउँ पन रोपी । बिमुख राम त्राता नहिं कोपी ॥ ७ ॥
संकर सहस बिष्नु अज तोही । सकहिं न राखि राम कर द्रोही ॥ ८ ॥

sajala mūla jinha saritanha nāhīm. baraṣi ga'ēm̐ puni tabahīm sukhāhīm. 6.
 sunu dasakaṇṭha kaha'um̐ pana rōpī. bimukha rāma trātā nahīm kōpī. 7.
 saṅkara sahasa biṣnu aja tōhī. sakahīm na rākhi rāma kara drōhī. 8.

Rivers that do not have a perennial source of water (such as a glacier) flow only while it rains, but they soon dry up when the rainy season passes away¹. (6)

Listen Ravana, the one with ten necks (“dasakaṇṭha”, and therefore ‘the one with ten heads’)! I tell you firmly under oath that no one can ever save anyone or give protection to him who is opposed to Lord Ram. [So be ware!] (7)

Even Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma in their thousands would not be able to protect you or afford to give shelter to you (if you are against Lord Ram).² (8)

[Note—¹Hanuman tells Ravana that all his powers, glory and majesty would remain temporary and transient, as they all depend upon the good effects of the severe Tapa (penance and austerity) that he had done, and are therefore liable to wear off by time, which would necessitate his doing fresh Tapa to retain them. But if he takes shelter of Lord Ram and gets the Lord’s blessings, these virtues would become permanent with him; he will no longer have to fear their loss, and neither would he have to appease Brahma, the creator, or Shiva, the concluder of this creation, in order to retain his authority and eminence.

It ought to be remembered here that Ravana had done severe Tapa in his early life in order to please Brahma and Shiva, and all the powers and strength and eminence that he had acquired were due to their granting of boons to him. This is what Hanuman alludes to here; he says that by the single act of pleasing Lord Ram, Ravana can achieve all that he desires without having to undertake the trouble associated with Tapa etc., and such achievements would be permanent too.

²To wit, thousands of Lord Shivas, Vishnus and Brahmas, i.e. anyone in creation, no matter how powerful and authoritative he may be, cannot protect him who is inimical to Lord Ram. Lord Ram protects his Bhakta (i.e. the Lord’s sincere and true devotee) so diligently that no harm would ever come to him. Not even thousands of the creators known as Lord Brahma or the concluder of creation known as Lord Shiva can either harm Lord Ram’s devotee or give support to anyone who is opposed to such a devotee. This warning has been given by Hanuman to the demon king Ravana.]

दो०. मोहमूल बहु सूल प्रद त्यागहु तम अभिमान ।

भजहु राम रघुनायक कृपा सिंधु भगवान ॥ २३ ॥

dōhā.

mōhamūla bahu sūla prada tyāgahu tama abhimāna.

bhajahu rāma raghunāyaka kṛpā sindhu bhagavāna. 23.

Abandon ‘abhimāna’ (false pride, ego, arrogance and haughtiness) as it is a dark and evil trait that is the root cause of all delusions and mischief that dog a creature, and it ruins his wisdom and rationale thinking.

Instead of harbouring ‘Abhiman’, you will do good to your own self by worshipping Lord Ram, the Lord of the Raghus, and having devotion for him, as he is

the all-merciful Lord, and an ocean of compassion, kindness, grace and benevolence.’¹ (Doha no. 23)

[Note—¹Hanuman hints to Ravana that if he could offer his worship to Lords Brahma and Shiva by subjecting himself to extreme hardship as part of the Tapa that he did to please them, why can’t he attain the same, and even a better objective by worshipping Lord Ram as this needs no great effort or any strenuous exercise. Simple devotion and surrender to the Lord is all that is required.]

चौ०. जदपि कही कपि अति हित बानी । भगति बिबेक बिरति नय सानी ॥ १ ॥
 बोला बिहसि महा अभिमानी । मिला हमहि कपि गुर बड़ ग्यानी ॥ २ ॥
 मृत्यु निकट आई खल तोही । लागेसि अधम सिखावन मोही ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

jadapi kahī kapi ati hita bānī. bhagati bibēka birati naya sānī. 1.
 bōlā bihasi mahā abhimānī. milā hamahi kapi gura baṛa gyānī. 2.
 mṛtyu nikaṭa āī khala tōhī. lāgēsī adhama sikhāvana mōhī. 3.

Although the Kapi (Hanuman) had said words that were highly beneficial for Ravana and were meant for his own good and welfare of the demon race, as they were imbued with the virtues of devotion, wisdom, dispassion, probity and propriety [1], ---

--- Yet Ravana, who was haughty and arrogant, would not listen to them. He laughed haughtily and retorted sarcastically, ‘Ah, we have met a Kapi who is a very wise teacher, and he seems to be an expert in all sorts of knowledge [2]! (1-2)

[Then turning towards Hanuman, Ravana strongly rebuked him, saying angrily—] Oh you wicked and mischievous fellow (khala)! It seems that ‘death’ has come near you. Though you are fallen creature (adhama), still you have the temerity to preach me.

[To wit, you are merely a little monkey of no consequence, a humble messenger of a prince and tied up in ropes, but you have a big mouth and speak of wisdom and propriety as if you were a wise man, a great and learned professor! You are loud-mouthed and pretentiously upright, trying to behave as if you were my best of friends, teaching me what is good for me, as if I was unaware of my own well-being. Woe to you; mind your tongue, you fool!]’ (3)

उलटा होइहि कह हनुमाना । मतिभ्रम तोर प्रगट मैं जाना ॥ ४ ॥
 सुनि कपि बचन बहुत खिसिआना । बेगि न हरहु मूढ़ कर प्राणा ॥ ५ ॥

ulaṭā hō’ihi kaha hanumānā. matibhrama tōra pragaṭa mairṁ jānā. 4.
 suni kapi bacana bahuta khisi’ānā. bēgi na harahu mūṛha kara prānā. 5.

Hanuman shot back, saying, ‘It will be the other way round. [To wit, it is you who is near ‘death’, instead of me.] It is now clear that your wisdom is clouded by delusions (so much so that you have forfeited any chance of redemption and recovery).

[Well then, so be it. Henceforth you alone are to be blamed for whatever misfortune befalls you and your clan in particular, and the demon race in general. When one is in the throes of death he is so overcome with delusions that no power in this world is able to pull him out of the dark pit into which he is sliding irrecoverably.]’ (4)

Hearing the words of the Kapi (Hanuman), Ravana was extremely peeved; he was miffed and exasperated by Hanuman’s retort, becoming excessively angry. He scowled and immediately ordered his demons, ‘Why don’t anyone of you sniff away the life out of this monkey this instant? [What are you waiting for? Why can’t anyone of you settle the score and teach this wretch the lesson regarding death that he so vociferously preaches me?]’ (5)

सुनत निसाचर मारन धाए । सचिवन्ह सहित बिभीषनु आए ॥ ६ ॥
नाइ सीस करि बिनय बहूता । नीति बिरोध न मारिअ दूता ॥ ७ ॥
आन दंड कछु करिअ गोसाँई । सबहीं कहा मंत्र भल भाई ॥ ८ ॥
सुनत बिहसि बोला दसकंधर । अंग भंग करि पठइअ बंदर ॥ ९ ॥

sunata nisācara mārana dhā'ē. sacivanha sahita bibhīṣanu ā'ē. 6.
nā'i sīsa kari binaya bahūtā. nīti birōdha na māri'a dūtā. 7.
āna daṇḍa kachu kari'a gōsāmī. sabahīm kahā mantra bhala bhā'ī. 8.
sunata bihasi bōlā dasakandhara. aṅga bhaṅga kari paṭha'i'a bandara. 9.

Hearing the commands of Ravana, the assembled demons rushed to kill Hanuman. At that moment Vibhishan (Ravana’s younger brother whom Hanuman had first met when he entered Lanka) arrived with ministers¹. (6)

He (Vibhishan) bowed his head most respectfully before Ravana, and politely pleaded with him, ‘Oh Lord, please do not kill a messenger as it is against established traditions and violates the norms regarding how a messenger of someone should be treated.

[To wit, if you allow this messenger to be killed, especially when it is done upon your express orders, it would put you and our family to great shame, and it would cause an irreparable damage to your great reputation. You are a great king, and great kings ought to act like one; they should be very mindful of their glorious name and their reputation, and never behave like street ruffians who cut throats for triflest of things. Oh lord, a messenger is merely an agent for the master who has sent him; he is protected by the law of immunity from personal harm that is granted to all messengers. If you have some score to be settled, then it should be settled with his master, and not him who is merely doing his duty faithfully and loyally. As a great king, even you send messengers, and I am sure you expect your messenger to be treated with similar immunity from personal harm; if the person to whom your messenger carries your words does not agree with you, you have the full right to go and defeat him in a battle. This line of action is sure to give you great name and fame. I am your beloved brother, and so I deem it my duty to advise you.] (7)

So, instead of killing him it is advisable to give him some other kind of punishment.²

Hearing this advice (of Vibhishan), all those who were present there expressed their unanimous approval of it. Everyone said: ‘Yes brothers, this is a good advice.’³ (8)

When Ravana heard of this unanimous decision, he smiled and said, ‘Well, if you all are of this opinion, then let some part of this monkey’s body be mutilated and he be sent back (to his master).’⁴ (9)

[Note—¹It is clear here that some of the ministers of the royal court of Ravana were on the side of Vibhishan. When the news of Hanuman’s arrival and his destruction of the royal garden, the killing of the demon warriors led by Akshayakumar, which was followed by another round of bloody fray with Meghnad in which another detachment of demon troops were slayed, and his subsequent capture and parading through the streets of Lanka as he was being taken to the court of Ravana, had spread like wild-fire in the city, some of the wiser ministers had realized the gravity of the situation even as they had a premonition of the impending catastrophe; so they rushed to Vibhishan to have an urgent conference with him to find out a way to diffuse the situation.

In the meanwhile there was an acrimonious exchange of sharp words between Ravana and Hanuman as we have read herein above. But just at the moment when the demons were instigated by their angry king, Ravana, to take revenge upon Hanuman, and they dashed forward to pounce upon him all at once, Vibhishan and his accompanying ministers made an entry.

²It ought to be noted here that Vibhishan did not waste any time in observing court formalities, such as to being seated first as is the norm for members of the royal family, and then seeking permission from the king to speak before saying what he wished to say, and neither did any of the ministers who accompanied him follow this routine. To wit, all remained standing, and Vibhishan made his submission as soon as he entered the royal court. This is because time was precious, as at the moment Vibhishan entered the hall he observed that a troop of excited demons were already on their way to kill Hanuman.

It is also to be noted here that when Vibhishan began to speak, the demons who had lunged to attack Hanuman halted on their paths, for no matter that they had dashed forward to please their king Ravana when he challenged any one of them to step forward and kill Hanuman, and thereby gain his favour, and hoping to have some reward for showing obedience, they nevertheless wished that some excuse be found by which they are spared the fearful prospect of direct confrontation with Hanuman, for the way he had mercilessly beaten and squashed the demon soldiers to pulp in the Ashok garden was well known by now, and the terror that this had struck in the hearts of the demons was so profound that internally no one wanted to face the same fate!

³Hence, when that much sought-after chance came by way of Vibhishan’s advice, everyone seized it instantly, and there was a chorus of approval.

⁴Ravana was not a fool; he had quietly observed how all the demons had kept a safe distance from Hanuman. And when he had challenged them to come forward and kill Hanuman, there was some reluctance and demurring initially in the rank and file of his soldiery, but some of them finally stepped forward when they saw the fire of anger spewing from Ravana’s eyes at their cowardice. They feared that Ravana, being of a

capricious mind, may suddenly decide to kill all the coward demons because they seemed to be scared to come forward to hit Hanuman. This fear, along with a desire to please Ravana with the hope of some reward and title, motivated the few demons who actually gathered courage to rush at Hanuman.

Ravana had observed all this. So when the assembly unanimously endorsed Vibhishan's advice not to kill Hanuman, Ravana smiled as he concluded that this endorsement was not out of some great propriety which the demons wished to observe, but a way out of their predicament. It was a face-saving formula for everyone.

Ravana was not so easily to be check-mated; he was not accustomed to hearing lectures; so therefore he became excessively wrathful internally as this was the first time in his life that someone (i.e. Hanuman and Vibhishan) had given him such a lecture. But since he faced the entire court, and a multitude of excited burghers and soldiers who had collected there to witness the spectacle, he decided to act more prudently and observe restraint on his emotions. This is the reason why he "smiled", though of course sarcastically.

He had ordered that Hanuman be mutilated, which means that those who thought themselves to be lucky they were spared the prospect of going near Hanuman to kill him would now have to do so in order to inflict some injury to his body! Kings are ruthless when it comes to carrying out their orders; so Ravana devised another device to push his soldiers to confront and punish Hanuman for the disrespect the latter had shown to him.

He also wished to enforce his orders of 'killing Hanuman', which was interrupted by Vibhishan's coming. This would be clear in the following Doha no. 24, which also explains why he "smiled".]

दो०. कपि कें ममता पूँछ पर सबहि कहउँ समुझाइ ।
तेल बोरि पट बाँधि पुनि पावक देहु लगाइ ॥ २४ ॥

dōhā.

kapi kēm mamatā pūm̐cha para sabahi kaha'um̐ samujhā'i.
tēla bōri paṭa bām̐dhi puni pāvaka dēhu lagā'i. 24.

[Ravana continued—] Let me tell you all; a monkey loves his tail very much. So you must dip cloth in oil, wrap it around his tail, and set it on fire.¹ (Doha no. 24)

[Note—¹Ravana had ordered the demons to mutilate Hanuman; a while ago he had ordered that they should kill him. So he thought of a wise plan which would bridge the gap between his first order of slaying Hanuman, and his second one that said he should be mutilated.

How will this mutilation be carried out? Those who have any experience of attending courts of kings, especially autocrat kings, they will know that it is the king who orders, and it is he who decides how this order is to be executed. Ministers and others more often than not prefer to wait for the king's decision rather than endeavouring to take any initiative on how the order of the king is to be implemented in practice unless and until the king expressly asks them for their advice.

Taking advantage of his privileged position, Ravana decided how his order of mutilation ought to be carried out; he ordered that Hanuman's tail should be wrapped

in cloth dipped in oil, and then set on fire! Well, if any part of a captive person is wrapped in cloth soaked in oil and alighted, will he not be roasted alive?

This device seemed to satisfy Ravana's wish to kill Hanuman: if he cannot be directly beheaded then let him be roasted alive!!

There is however another reason also why Ravana gave this ridiculous order. We have already read that Hanuman had told him that his wisdom and common-sense have come under the cloud of delusions as death has cast its long shadow on him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 24.}

Thus, Ravana forgot for a moment that by putting Hanuman's tail on fire he would be burnt alive, roasted alive—this is clear in the next verse herein below wherein he says “let this stupid monkey go back to his master without his tail, and then bring him here”. {Chaupai line no. 1 that follows Doha no. 24.}

This means that Ravana thought that Hanuman's tail alone would be burnt, and he would live to go back to Lord Ram! It is such an incredulous proposition from the practical point of view that it clearly proves that Ravana was truly deluded, and driven by Providence, was under the shadow of an impending disaster.

And as we shall soon read below that the dumb demons were only too eager to please Ravana; either they were so utterly foolish that they did not realize that by setting Hanuman's tail afire he would be burnt to death, or they were so terrified of incurring Ravana's wrath if they questioned his wisdom of doing so, that they all agreed cheerfully to do it. And what was the consequence? The magnificent city of Lanka, gilded and decked up like paradise, was burnt and reduced to a dark smouldering hulk.]

चौ०. पूँछहीन बानर तहँ जाइहि । तब सठ निज नाथहि लइ आइहि ॥ १ ॥

जिन्ह कै कीन्हिसि बहुत बड़ाई । देखउँ मैं तिन्ह कै प्रभुताई ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

pūm'chahīna bānara taham' jā'ihī. taba saṭha nija nāthahi la'i ā'ihī. 1.
jinha kai kīnhisi bahuta baṛā'ī. dēkha'um' maim' tinha kai prabhutā'ī. 2.

[Ravana was highly sarcastic when he observed in a taunting voice—] Let this stupid monkey go back without his tail, and then let him bring his Lord here! (1)

Let me see how great and powerful His Majesty the Lord is of whom he has sung great laurels and upon whom he has heaped so many praises.¹ (2)

[Note—¹In his haughtiness and a false sense of invincibility, Ravana shot down any chance of reconciliation. By sending back the messenger of a king with a part of his body mutilated is a clear sign of rebuke of that king, because the messenger, though being merely a humble emissary, is nevertheless a representative of the majesty of the king who had sent him, and any insult to this messenger is an insult of the person of that king, and hence it is an open challenge for war.

Had Ravana not gone to such an extreme limit of rashness, and had acted with a little more prudence, had he not provoked the demons to set Hanuman's tail on fire by the method he himself devised, it is quite certain that the doomed fate of Lanka, its burning, would have been avoided. But when the God of Death and Providence itself

decide otherwise, and join hands to bring about the downfall of a creature, then his wisdom, rational thinking and discretion go on a tailspin, nose-diving him to his own destruction and end.]

बचन सुनत कपि मन मुसुकाना । भइ सहाय सारद मैं जाना ॥ ३ ॥
जातुधान सुनि रावन बचना । लागे रचैं मूढ़ सोइ रचना ॥ ४ ॥
रहा न नगर बसन घृत तेला । बाढ़ी पूँछ कीन्ह कपि खेला ॥ ५ ॥

bacana sunata kapi mana musukānā. bha'i sahāya sārada mair̥m jānā. 3.
jātudhāna suni rāvana bacanā. lāgē racair̥m mūr̥ha sō'i racanā. 4.
rahā na nagara basana ghr̥ta tēlā. bār̥hī pūm̥cha kīnha kapi khēlā. 5.

When the Kapi (Hanuman) heard these words (of Ravana), he smiled and said to himself, 'There, I am certain that the deity of speech, known as Saraswati (sārada), is helping me (to fulfill my wishes).¹' (3)

On hearing the commands of Ravana, the dumb-witted demons did as he had ordered them to do (without thinking of its consequence)². (4)

All the cloth, clarified butter and oil that were available in Lanka were brought in even as the Kapi (Hanuman) continued to elongate his tail so that it always exceeded the length of cloth wrapped around it, and which was then soaked in oil and butter.

A time came when no more cloth, oil or butter was left in the city as all the stock available in its homes and shops was exhausted in this enterprise because the Kapi had played a trick upon these demons by continuing to lengthen his tail so much so that it always exceeded the supply of clothes used to cover it, and the combustible material poured over this wrapping.³ (5)

[Note—¹Hanuman had, from the very beginning, but specially after he saw how Sita was being treated in Lanka, wanted to avenge and exact a severe retribution from the demons. Had Ravana acted like a noble king ought to have acted and treated the messenger of his adversary king, and in the way Vibhishan expected him to behave, Hanuman would not have had a chance to vent his suppressed anger on the demons, for then he would be obliged to adhere to diplomatic courtesies and follow norms of behaviour that have been traditionally ordained for messengers of great kings; he would have had to be mindful of the reputation of his own Lord Ram so as not to do anything that was rash and improper.

But the ground situation had drastically changed; Ravana had ordered that his tail be set alight by wrapping it with cloth soaked in oil. So Hanuman thanked Saraswati, the goddess of wisdom and speech, for maneuvering things to his favour, because she had prevailed upon Ravana's mind and tweaked it such that he said things that gave Hanuman an excuse to fulfill his own wishes—to severely punish the demons in such a way that they will remember it for countless generations. We shall shortly read what havoc Hanuman unleashed on Lanka.

Hanuman was neither intimidated nor felt threatened by this absolutely absurd and madly incredulous order of Ravana. On the one hand Ravana had decided to spare Hanuman's life when he stopped his soldiers from attacking him on the request of

Vibhishan, and then he orders his soldiers to burn Hanuman's tail! Didn't Ravana understand that if any part of a person's body is wrapped in cloth and soaked in oil and then set on fire, it is impossible that he would survive the blaze; he would be roasted alive instead. Even a mad man would know it; so had Ravana taken complete leave of all his senses, or was it that the Lord God was helping Hanuman to carry out his mission to its natural end by creating circumstances that would make it easy for him to wreak vengeance upon the demon race?

Hanuman decided that surely it was the latter case: goddess Saraswati, the deity of speech and wisdom, has tweaked Ravana's mind and intellect in such a way that he has begun to hallucinate, seeing things that don't exist, and not seeing things that do exist; for Ravana did not see the impending disaster and the doom knocking at his door, but saw only the pleasure and enjoyment that would come to him in the grand spectacle of Hanuman's tail burning, and the latter yelling and jumping and running helter-skelter in terror!

²The demons followed Ravana's instructions blindly, either because they were too scared of him to question the rationale of his orders and warn him of its severe consequences, or because they were utterly stupid as not to realize that they are about to light a fuse attached to the keg of gunpowder, or perhaps they were like a child who is more interested in watching and participating in a dangerous spectacle than of thinking of how it would adversely impact him.

Whatever be the reason, but one thing is clear: that the outcome of this dangerous enterprise—of first making a thick wick of clothes by wrapping reams after reams of cloth around the tail of Hanuman, soaking it in combustible oil, then taking him around the city streets so that every household enthusiastically added and wrapped more cloth to the already thick and elongated wick, pour more oil to it so that the already drenched thick coil of cloth could soak no more and from which oil was liberally dripping and spreading all around the ground, and then setting fire to this prodigiously long fuse soaked with inflammable liquid was no less than lighting the fuse of a peg attached to a huge keg of gunpowder—was beyond the ken of both the demon citizens as well as their king, Ravana. They did not foresee that the fire that would ensue would be a huge inferno like the kind of which no one had seen before, and which was bound to engulf the entire city in a very short span of time because all its streets and ground were soaked in oil which would catch fire instantaneously.

This is because these demons, led by their king Ravana, seemed to have been gripped by the God of Death in his vicious embrace, and by Providence that was ill-humoured towards them, as a result of which their wisdom, simple common sense and judgment were obscured in a thick cloud of delusions that made them arrogant, haughty, and develop a false sense of invincibility that made them rash and imprudent.

³The demons brought all cloth available in the city, in its homes and shops, to wrap Hanuman's tail, but how hard they tried the cloth always fell short in length vis-à-vis the tail. It was obviously something very unusual, but the blockheaded demons, who were in the throes of death and destruction, could not understand what it meant. They went on wrapping the tail of Hanuman with reams and reams of cloth, and then emptying cans and drums of combustible liquid such as oil and butter over these wrappings. As the tail elongated, more and more cloth was needed to cover it, and therefore more and more gallons of oil and butter were requisitioned to soak this cloth.

So a time came when there was no cloth or oil left in the city.]

कौतुक कहँ आए पुरबासी । मारहिं चरन करहिं बहु हाँसी ॥ ६ ॥
बाजहिं ढोल देहिं सब तारी । नगर फेरि पुनि पूँछ प्रजारी ॥ ७ ॥

kautuka khamā ā'e purabāsi. mārahiṃ carana karahiṃ bahu hāṃsī. 6.
bājahim ḍhōla dēhim saba tāri. nagara phēri puni pūṃcha prajāri. 7.

The burghers of Lanka, both males and females, came in large hordes to witness the spectacle. They kicked Hanuman and laughed derisively. (6)

*As if some great carnival was taking place, they beat drums and clapped their hands.
They took Hanuman on a round of the city, and then set fire to his tail.¹

[*This stanza can be interpreted in another way also as follows: "The jovial demons beat drums and clapped their hands even as Hanuman's tail crept through the city streets like a slithering snake, and ultimately encircled the whole city. Then these doomed demons lit its end with a spark of fire."] (7)

[Note—¹To wit, the demon burghers had a good time at having fun of their lives. They made a procession as done during carnivals and festivities, beating drums and clapping their hands in merriment as they followed Hanuman round the city, pushing and kicking him jokingly all the way.

Of course the long hose made of reams and reams of oil-soaked cloth used to wrap Hanuman's tail was dragged behind him; and this also proved fatal for Lanka as the dripping oil from the cloth wetted the whole place, and as soon as the end of the cloth was set on fire, the whole place burst out in flames instantly.

It is not difficult to visualize what actually must have happened at that time. After initially wrapping Hanuman's tail with some length of cloth that was brought in hastily to the court of Ravana and then soaked in oil, or was first wrapped around the tail and then oil was poured over it, Hanuman was ordered to be paraded on the streets of Lanka. A grand procession set forth from Ravana's palace to go around the main avenues and neighbourhoods of the city; it was accompanied by musicians playing drums and other musical instruments; jesters and fun-seekers joined on the way, and the milling crowd thickened as the procession wound its way ahead. The scene was that of a street carnival. The demon householders ran out of their homes to join the fun, bringing with them their own contribution of cloth and oil which they enthusiastically added to the ever thickening and elongating coil of cloth dragging behind Hanuman. When it became too heavy and thick, some enterprising demons lifted it to carry it on forward, inviting others to add more cloth and oil as well as to help them lift and pull the thick wick forward. Of course there was no dearth of volunteers as everyone thought that more thicker and longer was the coil of cloth and the more properly soaked it became in oil, the grander would be spectacle and the fireworks that would follow when it was finally lit!

That was not all. The cheering crowd teased and jested at Hanuman; some pinched him, some poked at him, some pulled his hairs and arms, and some merely made faces at him. All the while Hanuman kept quiet, though he was seething with anger internally. He clenched his fists and grinded his teeth silently, muttering

vehemently under his breath, “Wait a little longer you jesters; wait for some more time you rascals, for then it would be me who will have the last laugh. And don’t worry about the much-expected spectacle that you all are so eager to witness, for on my honour and faith I promise you the grandest of spectacles that this world has ever witnessed! Let me first finish my round of the city; let me first see how beautiful your city of glided buildings and fragrant gardens is; for once the fireworks start, I will no longer have the chance to see its bounty of beauty again, for it would be reduced to a dark smouldering hulk of burnt buildings and smoked out gardens ere I leave it to go back to join my companions on the other shore of the ocean.”

So this is how ‘all the cloth and oil in the city was exhausted’, for every home brought out its own stock of cloth and oil to add to Hanuman’s tail as he was paraded through the streets on the instructions of Ravana.

And this is also how the whole city was set ablaze so quickly, for as soon as the fire was lit, the oil that was spilled all over the city caught fire instantaneously and leapt up in an inferno. A strong breeze started, and this fanned the flames further. Soon, the whole of the grand city of Lanka, that had put to shame the majesty of paradise, was like a gigantic fire-place, with leaping flames, hot wind howling, crackling timber, collapsing buildings, and dazzling sparks of fire flying everywhere—a sight straight out of doomsday. Whatever cloth and oil that still remained in the homes and shops caught fire in the intense heat, by the flying sparks and the burning debris falling on them, aiding in the blaze spreading. By-and-by, Lanka was completely burnt down to ashes.]

पावक जरत देखि हनुमंता । भयउ परम लघुरूप तुरंता ॥ ८ ॥

निबुकि चढ़ेउ कपि कनक अटारीं । भई सभित निसाचर नारीं ॥ ९ ॥

pāvaka jarata dēkhi hanumantā. bhaya'u parama laghurūpa turantā. 8.
nibuki caṛhē'u kapi kanaka aṭārīm. bha'īm sabhīta nisācara nārīm. 9.

As soon as Hanuman saw that the fire has been ignited, he immediately assumed a miniature form (like the one he had when he entered Lanka)¹. (8)

Slipping out of his bondage, he immediately sprang on the terraces and the attics of the gilded palaces (jumping from one terrace or attic to another in rapid succession).

This action of his created a flutter amongst the demon ladies who became sore affright². (9)

[Note—¹At the time of being captured by Meghand and being brought as a captive to the court of Ravana, Hanuman was in his normal form, but when he had entered Lanka he had assumed a very small form to avoid detection—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 4.

So he assumed that small form once again to slip out easily from the clothes that had been tied to his tail when it was long and thick. The grip of the bondage became loose as soon as Hanuman reduced his physical size. The demons had not thought of this trick, and they were caught unawares.

The thick reams of oil-drenched cloth that spread through the streets of Lanka after Hanuman slipped out of it caught fire and set the whole city alight.

It ought to be noted that he had this magical ability to change the size of his body, for besides assuming a miniature form he had once also assumed a colossal form, like that of a huge mountain, before embarking on the mission—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 30. He does this again after freeing himself from the bondage as we shall read in Doha no. 25 herein below.

²While the male demons joined the revelry on the streets as Hanuman was paraded through Lanka, their ladies watched the spectacle from the terraces and attics of their gilded homes. So as soon as Hanuman freed himself from the wrappings of clothes, that had begun to send tongues of flames leaping high through the streets by now, and started jumping from one house to another, dragging burning cloth behind him, the demonesses watching the scene got terrified out of their wits. They screamed in horror and scrambled madly for cover, for this new terror had come so suddenly and unexpectedly to these poor ladies that they had no time to think.]

दो०. हरि प्रेरित तेहि अवसर चले मरुत उनचास ।
अट्टहास करि गर्जा कपि बढि लाग अकास ॥ २५ ॥

dōhā.

hari prērita tēhi avasara calē maruta unacāsa.
aṭṭahāsa kari garjā kapi baḍhi lāga akāsa. 25.

Driven (inspired and motivated) by the will of Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; or by Providence), just at that time all the forty-nine forms of the wind¹ began blowing simultaneously².

The Kapi (Hanuman) laughed aloud contemptuously in a resounding tone even as he enlarged his body once again so much so that it seemed to touch the sky². (Doha no. 25)

[Note—¹According to the scriptures there are forty-nine types of wind, and each type is presided over by a god who is called ‘Marut’.

The 49 Maruts—They are the Wind-Gods mentioned in Rig Veda, 1/37-39 and 1/165/3, 5, 7, 9. They are regarded variously as — (i) sons of Indra and Vrishni (Rig Veda, 2/34/2), (ii) Sons of Rudra (Rig Veda, 2/33/1), (iii) similar to the Fire-God (Rig Veda, 6/66/2), and (vi) Indra God (Rig Veda, 1/165, 171). The Purans call them sons of sage Kashyap and Diti.

The *Atharva-shikha* Upanishad of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Kandika 1 says that the Maruts were created along with the Moon God, the Mantras of the Atharva Veda, the Viraat Chanda and the Samvartak Agni. It is the fourth leg or Paad of Brahm and corresponds to the Ardha Matra of the half a syllable that follows the the third letter ‘M’ of the ethereal word OM representing Brahm.

The *Nrisingh Purvatapini Upanishad* of the Atharva Veda tradition, in its Canto 2, verse no. 2 dealing with the concept of OM says that the fourty nine 49 Maruts are the Ganas or attendants of the fourth syllable which is the Ardha Matra of OM.

(b) Wind God (Vayu or Anil)—appears first in the Rig Veda, 1/2/1-3; 1/134. The ‘vital air or wind element’ was created from the Pran or the vital life-sustaining vitality of the creator Prajapati Brahma (Rig Veda, 10/90/13). He is regarded as the Atma of all the Gods (Shathpath Brahman, 9/1/2/38). He bestows immortality to the Gods and other exalted souls who are able to please and control him (Rig Veda, 10/186/3). He has the fastest speed amongst the Gods (Taittiriya Sanhita, 3/8/7/1). He moves in an oblique line (and not straight) (Jaimini Brahman, 3/3/10).

²To wit, a severe storm arose, and it fanned the flames. In this context we must remember that Hanuman was the “son of the wind god”, and one of his many names is ‘Maruti’, i.e. the son of Marut. All the forty-nine Maruts are the same Wind God in different forms and playing different roles.

So when the Wind God’s own son was in action, it is very natural that his exalted and powerful father would help him in the enterprise, especially when this enterprise is in the service of the Gods themselves, in the service of Lord Ram who was none other than the Supreme Being in his form, and for the good of the entire creation in general because the demons had been tormenting all the creatures.

It is common observance that when a huge fire is lit, a strong breeze begins to blow. It is because hot air rises up, and the surrounding cooler air rushes in, or is sucked in by the vacuum thus created, to fill in the space; it is a scientific phenomenon.

So therefore, when the blaze started, and the stronger it grew, a strong breeze swept through the city of Lanka. This wind further fanned the flames, and the fire spread to even those areas where the oil-soaked cloth was not present.

The homes and palaces had wood as their basic framework on which gold was plated; the doors, windows, roofs and walls had wood all over them. So there was no problem for the blaze to spread, and the strong wind aided its progress. Even in modern times when wood is rarely used in buildings, a fire destroys huge buildings and may even spread to the surrounding neighbourhood if not controlled in time.]

चौ०. देह बिसाल परम हरुआई । मंदिर तें मंदिर चढ़ धाई ॥ १ ॥

जरड़ नगर भा लोग बिहाला । झपट लपट बहु कोटि कराला ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

dēha bisāla parama haru'āī. mandira tēm mandira caṛha dhāī. 1.

jara'i nagara bhā lōga bihālā. jhapṭa lapṭa bahu kōṭi karālā. 2.

Hanuman assumed a huge form that was light and nimble (instead of being heavy and bulky as it would have impeded his movements) even as he jumped quickly and easily from one building to another. (1)

The whole city was burning; its citizens were exceedingly panicky and at their wit’s end. Fierce tongues of flame were leaping ferociously in all the directions, everywhere, even as terrified citizens ran helter-skelter screaming in horror.¹ (2)

[Note—¹The scene of the ‘Burning of Lanka’ has been very vividly and wonderfully described in Tulsidas’ book “Kavitawali”. Refer: Kavitawali, Sundar Kand, verse nos. 3-25.]

तात मातु हा सुनिअ पुकारा । एहिं अवसर को हमहि उबारा ॥ ३ ॥
 हम जो कहा यह कपि नहिं होई । बानर रूप धरें सुर कोई ॥ ४ ॥
 साधु अवग्या कर फलु ऐसा । जरइ नगर अनाथ कर जैसा ॥ ५ ॥

tāta mātu hā suni'a pukārā. ēhim avasara kō hamahi ubārā. 3.
 hama jō kahā yaha kapi nahim hō'ī. bānara rūpa dharēm sura kō'ī. 4.
 sādhu avagyā kara phalu aisā. jara'i nagara anātha kara jaisā. 5.

The only sound that was heard everywhere was the frantic call of the panicky citizens who lamented and wailed, 'Oh my dear, oh my mother, who will save us now! (3)

What we had guessed that this fellow cannot be, and is not an ordinary monkey, turns out to be true, for verily he must be some great God in his form (who has come here to take revenge upon us)¹. (4)

Surely indeed, it is the result of insulting and disobeying pious people (sādhu avagyā), and a curse obtained thereby, that the city is burning like this². (5)

[Note—¹We have already read earlier that there were some demon warriors who had witnessed the mayhem in the Ashok garden when Hanuman killed large number of troops of demon soldiers and Ravana's son Akshayakumar, and had even beaten back the mighty Meghnad before being captured, but who managed to escape death somehow to report the death and destruction to Ravana—it were these demons who had privately concluded that Hanuman was definitely no ordinary creature though they were afraid of punishment if they said this to Ravana or any of the senior demons. But nevertheless, they must have shared their feelings with their family members, albeit on condition of secrecy. So when the city was up in flames, they vented their feelings and shared their premonition publicly. But it was too late by now; the city was already ablaze.

²The citizens were referring to Vibhishan's advice to Ravana to let-off Hanuman with a slight punishment because it is wrong to harm messengers. Vibhishan was amongst the few demons who were pious and devoted to Lord God; defying him has resulted in the burning of Lanka.

It would be clear shortly that Vibhishan's home was spared from the inferno, and so was the garden where Sita stayed and was attended by Trijata, one other female demon who was god-fearing. These two places were spared because holy and pious souls abided in them.]

जारा नगरु निमिष एक माहीं । एक बिभीषन कर गृह नाहीं ॥ ६ ॥
 ता कर दूत अनल जेहिं सिरिजा । जरा न सो तेहि कारन गिरिजा ॥ ७ ॥
 उलटि पलटि लंका सब जारी । कूदि परा पुनि सिंधु मझारी ॥ ८ ॥

jārā nagaru nimiṣa ēka māhīm. ēka bibhīṣana kara gr̥ha nāhīm. 6.
tā kara dūta anala jēhim sirijā. jarā na sō tēhi kārana girijā. 7.
ulaṭi palaṭi laṅkā saba jārī. kūdi parā puni sindhu majhārī. 8.

The city (of Lanka) was burnt in a short time, in the twinkling of an eye. One home that was spared from the inferno was that of Vibhishan. (6)

And, oh Girija (Parvati; the consort of Lord Shiva)¹, Hanuman was the messenger of the Lord who had produced the ‘fire element’ itself (at the time of creation), and this is why he escaped from being burnt². (7)

He burnt the whole of Lanka, from one end to the other. After that, he jumped into the middle of the ocean (to douse the lingering fire that still smouldered on the remnant of cloth that stuck to his tail, as well as to cool and refresh himself). (8)

[Note—¹It ought to be remembered that this wonderful story is being narrated by Lord Shiva to his consort goddess Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 20 also.

²Lord Ram, who is the Supreme Being himself who created this world and its primary elements, such as the sky, air, fire, water and earth, ensured that Hanuman was given immunity from the harm that fire causes. Remember: When king Dasrath performed a fire sacrifice to beget sons, the Fire God had manifested himself and had given a sweet pudding to the king, asking him to let it be shared by his queens, Kaushalya, Kaikeyi and Sumitra. Lord Ram was born of Kaushalya as a reward of her sharing a portion of this blessed pudding. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Doha no. 189 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede it.}

To wit, Lord Ram had his own roots in the sacred Fire. So he knew the secrets of the fire element; he could harness the fire’s dynamic powers. In effect, Lord Ram was privy to some mystical ways by which he could exercise control over the fire element and its presiding deity, the Fire God, who incidentally was favourably inclined to the Lord’s wishes for three reasons: one is that the Lord was the fruit of the blessing of the Fire God himself as is evident in the way he was born; the second is that Lord Ram is the Supreme Being who is the Father of the Fire God himself; and the third is that Lord Ram is on a mission to fulfill the wishes of the Gods themselves who had prayed to Lord Vishnu to help them get rid of the menace of Ravana and the evil demons.

Lord Ram had employed his special relations with the Fire God by placing Sita in the latter’s safe custody before Ravana abducted her shadow which she left behind. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 24.}

So here, Lord Ram asked the Fire God to afford his protection to Hanuman and spare him from being burnt in the fire that raged through Lanka.

There is one other obvious reason why Hanuman escaped being scorched. He ran ahead of the spreading blaze, jumping and skipping over buildings as the fire spread rapidly; he had already freed himself from the thick wick of cloth and oil that gave direction to the fire. Besides this, there was another fortunate coincidence: the wind blew in a direction that was opposite of the area of the city where the house of Vibhishan and the Ashok garden were located, so these two also escaped being burnt!]

दो०. पूँछ बुझाइ खोइ श्रम धरि लघु रूप बहोरि ।
जनकसुता के आगे ठाढ़ भयउ कर जोरि ॥ २६ ॥

dōhā.

pūm̐cha bujhā'i khō'i śrama dhari laghu rūpa bahōri.
janakasutā kēm āgēm ṭhārha bhaya'u kara jōri. 26.

After extinguishing the remnants of fire of his tail and refreshing himself (by dipping in the water of the ocean), Hanuman once again resumed his diminutive form and came to stand submissively with joined hands before Sita.¹ (Doha no. 26)

[Note—¹It was time for departure, so Hanuman decided to meet Sita once again—to see how she had fared during the blaze, to say a final word of assurance to her, to ask her if she has any message for Lord Ram, and take her permission to go back.]

चौ०. मातु मोहि दीजे कछु चीन्हा । जैसें रघुनायक मोहि दीन्हा ॥ १ ॥
चूड़ामनि उतारि तब दयऊ । हरष समेत पवनसुत लयऊ ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mātu mōhi dījē kachu cīnhā. jaisēm raghunāyaka mōhi dīnhā. 1.
cūrāmani utāri taba daya'ū. haraṣa samēta pavanasuta laya'ū. 2.

[Hanuman said to Sita—] ‘Mother, please be kind to give me some token such as the one which Lord Ram had given me when I had come here¹ (so that when I go back the Lord would be convinced that I have indeed met you).’ (1)

Sita immediately took off the ornament that she wore on her head, the diadem (cūrāmani)², and gave it to the son of the wind god (Hanuman), which the latter most gratefully accepted with immense joy. (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram had given his finger ring to Hanuman as a token to prove to Sita that he (Hanuman) was indeed the Lord’s messenger, and not an imposter. It was this ring that convinced Sita that Hanuman was truly a messenger who had been sent by the Lord. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 9-12 that precede Doha no. 23; and Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 13.

²Though Sita had discarded all her royal ornaments at the time of accompanying Lord Ram to the forest as she was expected to be attired in a fashion that would be suitable for life in as a hermitress as she was to live in the forest with her hermit husband, Lord Ram, but nevertheless there were certain ornaments that she could rightly wear, and would not be required to discard, as she was a married woman who was accompanying her husband on his journey. One such ornament was the “Chudamani”, a jewel that is worn in the hair on the head by all married women.

Just as the ‘finger ring’ is a single most important jewel that honourable men wear, the ‘Chudamani’ is the single most important jewel for all honourable women. When a person is separated from someone whom he loves most dearly in life and a chance fortunately comes when he is able to send a token of his affection and love to that lost individual, he would definitely send a thing that is most valuable for him, such as the finger ring that Lord Ram had sent to Sita to express his deep emotion and remembrance of her. So Sita wished to reciprocate the same emotion by sending her Chudamani to Lord Ram as a gift or a token, because this jewel was the single most important piece of her basic attire as a married woman.

This exchange of gifts, the finger ring by Lord Ram and the chudamani by Sita, had an immense symbolic meaning: when a man gifts a finger ring to a woman he expresses his love for her and his commitment to be ever loyal to her; when the lady gives the jewel of her hair to a man she expresses her deep attachment to him and a desire to submit herself to him without any questions asked.

To wit, when Sita sent the jewel of her head to Lord Ram it was a strong and clear message to him that she has surrendered herself to the Lord, and it is his responsibility to take full care of her. Similarly, when Lord Ram sent his finger ring to Sita it was a clear and incontrovertible message to her that the Lord is fully committed to her and loves no other woman but her.

This exchange of token gifts, Lord Ram’s finger ring and Sita’s jewel, was a mutual pledge of loyalty between the two, a reiteration of trust and an expression of faith in each other.]

कहेहु तात अस मोर प्रनामा । सब प्रकार प्रभु पूरनकामा ॥ ३ ॥
 दीन दयाल बिरिदु संभारी । हरहु नाथ मम संकट भारी ॥ ४ ॥
 तात सक्रसुत कथा सुनाएहु । बान प्रताप प्रभुहि समुझाएहु ॥ ५ ॥
 मास दिवस महुँ नाथु न आवा । तौ पुनि मोहि जिअत नहिँ पावा ॥ ६ ॥

kahēhu tāta asa mōra pranāmā. saba prakāra prabhu pūranakāmā. 3.
 dīna dayāla biridu sambhārī. harahu nātha mama saṅkaṭa bhārī. 4.
 tāta sakrasuta kathā sunā'ēhu. bāna pratāpa prabhuhi samujhā'ēhu. 5.
 māsa divasa mahum' nāthu na āvā. tau puni mōhi ji'ata nahim pāvā. 6.

[After giving her diadem to Hanuman, Sita told him the message she wished to be conveyed to Lord Ram. She said—] ‘My dear son (tāta)! First convey my deep obeisance and tell that I bow my head, and then prey to the Lord on my behalf, saying “Oh Lord, you are the one who fulfills all wishes (of everyone). (3)

Oh the merciful and gracious Lord! Remembering your reputation as someone who removes all distress and agony of those who suffer but have surrendered themselves to you, please be kind to exterminate my sorrows and miseries which are immense and have become intolerable for me.” (4)

My dear son (tāta)! Then recounting the story related to the son of Indra (sakrasuta) to him (Lord Ram), remind him of the power and the glory of his arrows¹. (5)

If the Lord does not come within one month, then surely he will not find me alive².
(6)

[Note—¹This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 1—to Doha no. 2.

To wit, Sita asks Hanuman to tell Lord Ram that he must recall how he had picked up a humble blade of grass and used it as an arrow to shoot at Jayant, the wicked son of Indra, who had disguised himself as a crow to prick her. When blood had oozed out from the wound, Lord Ram decided to punish him. Jayant had flown round the entire universe in order to find a place to hide, but the arrow pursued it everywhere relentlessly. No god or deity was ready to offer him refuge against Lord Ram's arrow. At last, sage Narad had advised him to go and surrender before the Lord, begging for forgiveness and mercy, for then the Lord will surely excuse him. So Jayant came and fell down before the Lord, and the Lord forgave him and spared his life. But since the Lord's arrow was infallible and could not go in vain, it was obligatory that something must be hit with it. Hence, the arrow hit Jayant's eye and blinded it. For all times to come, Jayant became 'one-eyed', and since he had disguised himself as a crow, it is believed that all the crows were henceforth cursed to become 'crooked-eyed' or 'cock-eyed'.

Sita wished that this story be narrated to Lord Ram to remind him about his astounding potentials and stupendous abilities to motivate and inspire him, to instill confidence in him, and to lift his fighting spirit to its original form. In case he has become too depressed and has lost his willingness to fight Ravana, this story would remind him of his grand reputation and the mystical powers that he possessed that not even the gods of the universe could dare to offer protection to someone, in this case Jayant, who had offended the Lord. If the Lord did not spare even the son of Indra who is the 'king of gods', then what do Ravana count as he is merely a 'evil demon' who ought to be punished nevertheless for his sins and cruel nature, even if he had not abducted her.

²This is because Ravana had threatened to kill Sita after the expiry of one month—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 10.]

कहु कपि केहि बिधि राखौं प्राना । तुम्हहू तात कहत अब जाना ॥ ७ ॥
तोहि देखि सीतलि भइ छाती । पुनि मो कहूँ सोइ दिनु सो राती ॥ ८ ॥

kahu kapi kēhi bidhi rākhaum prānā. tumhahū tāta kahata aba jānā. 7.
tōhi dēkhi sītali bha'i chātī. puni mō kahum' sō'i dinu sō rātī. 8.

[Expressing her sense of loneliness and gloom, Sita said to Hanuman—] 'Tell me oh Kapi, how and by what means can I hold to my life for now you too say that you are going away. (7)

Since I first saw you my heart has found solace and comfort, and it feels cool after suffering from the intense heat of suffering. But how unlucky and unfortunate I am that I will have to face once again the same sort of day and night that I was compelled to face till your arrival.¹ (8)

[¹Once you go back, I will find myself all alone. While you were here I had felt very safe as I had a protector to protect me; but when you go away I will be left to my ill-fate, and things would be worse for me as these cruel demons will surely vent their anger at me. Till the time you were here I found some peace as these rascals desisted from tormenting me out of your fear; but with your going away they will turn the heat on me, and make life hell for me. Yes truly it was hell even before you came, but I had got some respite while you were here, and so this hell would be felt all the more striking by me when my suffering resume after you go away, even if by some remote good chance the demons decide to leave me alone for fear of severe retribution and backlash later on when you come back again and learn that they had tormented me. This thought fills me with gloom and dismay. But what can be done. I realize that you must be allowed to go, for otherwise how will the Lord get news of my sufferings, and how will the Lord come to free me. So I will bear with my sufferings for some more time.]

दो०. जनकसुतहि समुझाइ करि बहु बिधि धीरजु दीन्ह ।

चरन कमल सिरु नाइ कपि गवनु राम पहि कीन्ह ॥ २७ ॥

dōhā.

janakasutahi samujhā'i kari bahu bidhi dhīraju dīnha.
carana kamala siru nā'i kapi gavanu rāma pahim kīnha. 27.

Hanuman explained the situation to the daughter of Janak (“janakasutahi”; Sita)¹ and reassured her in various ways, asking her to have courage and patience.

Then he bowed his head before her lotus-like (holy) feet, and took leave of her to start on his journey back to Lord Ram. (Doha no. 27)

[Note—¹Hanuman understood the mental state of Sita. He explained to her that it was crucial for him to go back to Lord Ram to inform him about her, and then soon come back with an army to free her from the clutches of her captors and punish them. Being emotional and getting upset would not serve any purpose, for if he stayed back to please her then the Lord would not know what has happened, and the precious time of one month would pass without any tangible action on the ground. She must understand its gravity and let him go, for it is better to suffer for some short time now than to regret later on.

And as far as the demons are concerned, she must feel secured as they won't feel inclined nor dare to worry her any longer, for they are by now so terrified by what he (Hanuman) had done to them that, first of all they would be busy nursing their wounds and taking stock of the destruction of Lanka, and secondly they would be so occupied with the fearful thoughts of the impending invasion by a formidable army consisting of countless soldiers who are the likes of Hanuman that they won't have any thought left for anything else!

So Hanuman most humbly said to Sita, “Mother, let me say adieu to thee for now. I shall be back in a short time, but at that time I will come to thee as a victor to boldly take thou back to Lord Ram, who will, by then, have exterminated all thine tormentors. A month's time is not a long time, and it will pass away soon. Meanwhile, have courage and faith, and trust me that thy sufferings are nearing their end. Don't lose thy coolness and patience that has been thine wonderful quality that has

supported thee in thy moments of suffering. Mother, I repeat, for which I should please be excused, don't forsake hope, trust, equanimity, coolness and patience as they will stand thee in good stead. Adieu for now; I shall be back soon with Lord Ram!"']

चौ०. चलत महाधुनि गर्जेसि भारी । गर्भं स्रवहिं सुनि निसिचर नारी ॥ १ ॥

नाघि सिंधु एहि पारहि आवा । सबद किलिकिला कपिन्ह सुनावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calata mahādhuni garjēsi bhārī. garbha sravahim suni nisicara nārī. 1.

nāghi sindhu ēhi pārahi āvā. sabada kilikilā kapinha sunāvā. 2.

At the time of his departure from Lanka, Hanuman roared thunderously, as a result of which the pregnant demon females had miscarriage.¹ (1)

He leapt across the ocean and landed jubilantly on this side of the shore, while making a shrill cry of joy and exhilaration (to indicate to his companions, who were eagerly waiting for his arrival, that he had good news for them).² (2)

[Note—¹Hanuman's thunderous roar was so chilling and ear-shattering that it made the female demons abort instantly out of shock. Meanwhile, the male demons were overcome with such terror and were so horrified by the prospects of a deadly war which was sure to exact a heavy toll on them that they forgot all about conjugal pleasures, as their attention was diverted to devising means to survive the war that was looming on the horizon. This effectively meant that one generation of demons was done away with in a jiffy!

Let us pause a while here and reflect on this subject of Hanuman crossing the ocean, or rather 'flying over it'. First of all the question is: can a creature, other than birds and insects and those who have wings, can actually fly in the sky, like the way Hanuman has said to have done? Well, to answer this vexed question, let us take another example. A man can swim in the water like a fish or any other aquatic animal only if he has acquired the necessary skill and have the knowledge of how to do it; not everyone can swim. Similarly, it is also possible to leave the earth and become air-borne if one has the necessary knowledge and skill. We have air planes and both manned and unmanned drones in modern times that do exactly this, and that too with a heavy load of passengers and luggage. So therefore there is no surprise at all that Hanuman could lift himself from the ground and be air-borne because he had this specialized knowledge and skill which enabled him to do so.

And in the entire kingdom of Kishkindha, Hanuman was the only one who had this special ability, most surely because he was the son of the wind god, and Hanuman's father must have taught and trained his son how to 'fly like the wind'. A father would naturally want that his son should acquire skills that are special to his family, and therefore it is quite natural that the wind god taught his son Hanuman the skills required to fly in the air. No other member of the kingdom of Kishkindha had this unique ability. It is for this reason that Lord Ram had selected him to carry his finger-ring and the message for Sita at the time the group of messengers were getting ready for departure from Kishkindha, for the Lord clearly was aware that one would have to cross the barrier of the ocean if he was to find Sita at all as he had already

known that she was taken away by Ravana who lived in the island of Lanka in the middle of the ocean, and that Hanuman alone could do so.

This ability of Hanuman to ‘fly in the air’ came in handy during the war itself; when Laxman was wounded in the battle-field and the need arose to bring some medicine man who would advise some herbs that could revive Laxman, Hanuman was assigned these twin jobs—first to bring a doctor, and then go and bring the herb prescribed by him. When the medicine man prescribed the necessary herbs that could only be found in the Himalayan Mountains in the north of mainland India, it was Hanuman once again who was selected for this job, as he alone could fly swiftly to cover this huge distance and bring the herb within the prescribed time. We shall read about it in due course when we read the details of the epic war and this episode. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 54—to Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 62.}

When Hanuman had entered Lanka he came in quietly, but when he left it he roared thunderously like a victor whose mission was a resounding success. He roared to warn the demons that he is challenging them to stop him if they can, and to be wary of ever disturbing Sita because if he got any wind that they had mistreated her then all hell would break loose upon them, and he would roast them alive.

But what does his entering Lanka ‘silently’ but departing with a ‘thunderous roar’ indicate? Well, when he was on his way to Lanka he had done so as a modern-day drone or a glider does, or the way a kite, a hawk or a vulture would dive or swoop down from the sky on the intended target—they do so silently, almost imperceptibly. Hanuman did not want that his arrival should be a matter of public display in Lanka as it would ruin his prospects of success, and force him to encounter severe resistance from the first instance, which any spy on a reconnoitering mission would obviously like to avoid at all costs. So he glided and landed silently on the soil of Lanka.

However, the departure time was another thing—he was leaving as a triumphant victor who had vanquished his enemy and brought the latter to his heel; he had lain to ruin the magnificent city of Lanka and left its inhabitants reeling with shock. Hence, there was no reason to leave quietly like a thief or a defeated person who goes away gloomily in shame. He was positively proud and upbeat about his achievements, and so he ‘thundered away in jubilation to celebrate the occasion’. A more obvious reason is this: like an air plane using its jet engines to take off from a flat runway, and everyone knows that jet engines make an ear-splitting noise while doing so, Hanuman had made a roar like the thunderclap at the time of leaving Lanka.

These two methods used by Hanuman to arrive and leave Lanka, silently and with a roar respectively, lead us to make another interesting observation: At the time of launching himself from the northern shores of the ocean he had the benefit of using a chain of tall hills upon which he jumped swiftly and ran rapidly across to gain the required momentum and lift to become air borne. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 1.} So therefore, he could rise high up in the sky and silently glide over the water to land quietly at the designated place in the dark of the night.

But this facility was not available to him on the shores of Lanka, and neither was he very particular about keeping himself unknown like he had done while entering Lanka by being silent. So therefore, he launched himself proudly much like an air plane using its jet engines—i.e. with a lot of thunderous noise!

Even if his launch from the northern shore of the ocean from where he took off on his journey for Lanka did make a roaring sound like that of a jet plane taking off, as it surely must have been the case, it didn’t matter much to Hanuman as it was

on this side of the ocean which was a long distance of approximately 800 miles off the coast of Lanka. What was crucial for the success of his plan was to enter the demon island of Lanka silently, without making a fuss and alerting anyone, so that the secrecy of the mission can be maintained. This he achieved by setting foot on Lanka's soil quietly, without making any noise, just like a drone or a glider would do, or like a kite, a hawk or a vulture would also do.

²Ever since Hanuman had gone on his mission to Lanka, all the monkeys and bears sat on the shore of the ocean silently in a very somber mood; some spent time alone and others huddled together in small groups contemplating about the future and praying to God to help them. The overall mood was that of anxiety, worry, uncertainty and gloom. Every now and then they would look up into the sky for any sign of Hanuman returning; they would gaze endlessly into the horizon in the direction they had seen Hanuman go; any sound from that direction would make them prick their ears to hear it and guess what it meant. Each passing hour seemed an era; time virtually stopped; the sun seemed to burn them and the moon aroused ghosts and phantoms.

In the midst of such distressful time of gloom and uncertainty when these poor monkeys and bears were holding on to dear life by a thin thread of hope and faith, they saw a streak of light in the blue sky coming towards them, and heard a thunderous roar. Woken up from their numbed existence rudely by this sight and sound, they were initially shocked and worried for the worst. But soon as Hanuman's form became clearer as he drew near, and upon hearing his jubilant cry that comes naturally from someone who has achieved exemplary success in a difficult mission and is returning home with some great good news to convey to his dear companions, these monkeys and bears sprang upon their feet with a loud cry of joy even as they stretched their hands upwards to welcome Hanuman. From the cheerful countenance of Hanuman and his excited bodily gestures as he waved at them joyfully from the sky they could easily perceive that he has been mighty successful in his mission, and has some excellent news to convey.]

हरषे सब बिलोकि हनुमाना । नूतन जन्म कपिन्ह तब जाना ॥ ३ ॥

मुख प्रसन्न तन तेज बिराजा । कीन्हेसि रामचंद्र कर काजा ॥ ४ ॥

मिले सकल अति भए सुखारी । तलफत मीन पाव जिमि बारी ॥ ५ ॥

haraṣē saba bilōki hanumānā. nūtana janma kapinha taba jānā. 3.
mukha prasanna tana tēja birājā. kīnhēsi rāmacandra kara kājā. 4.
milē sakala ati bha'ē sukhārī. talaphata mīna pāva jimi bārī. 5.

All of them (i.e. all the messengers who were eagerly awaiting his arrival on this side of the ocean) were tremendously exhilarated on seeing Hanuman back; they felt so relieved as if they have got a new lease of life, as if they have been born again¹. (3)

He (Hanuman) had a very cheerful face, and his body was thrilled with pulsating energy; this signaled to his companions that he has indeed accomplished success in doing Lord Ram's work (i.e. in finding about Sita). (4)

All the members of the expecting group met him cordially and most enthusiastically, for all of them were overcome with great emotional excitement. The whole group felt

extremely exuberant and exhilarated just like a fish that is made to intensely suffer from want of water, suddenly finds it². (5)

[Note—¹This is because if Hanuman had failed in his mission they would all have to suffer the wrath of their king Sugriv who, as we must remember, had threatened to kill them if they returned empty-handed, without any information of Sita. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 22.}

And this fear of death was explicitly expressed by Angad and silently by others when the group had reached the shore of the ocean but saw no sign of success till then. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-10 that precede Doha no. 26; and Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 27.}

Therefore, when it was clear that Hanuman had met Sita and has brought back positive news about her, all the messengers felt that they have got a new life.

²The comparison is highly apt here. The fish will surely die if water is not made available to it; and when it does find water it gets a fresh lease of life. Similarly, these monkeys and bears felt rejuvenated and energized as soon as they saw and heard that Hanuman has come back successfully from the mission, that he has indeed met Sita and is now equipped with all the necessary information about her. This news would be most welcome by Sugriv as well as by Lord Ram.]

चले हरषि रघुनायक पासा । पूँछत कहत नवल इतिहासा ॥ ६ ॥
तब मधुबन भीतर सब आए । अंगद संमत मधु फल खाए ॥ ७ ॥
रखवारे जब बरजन लागे । मुष्टि प्रहार हनत सब भागे ॥ ८ ॥

calē haraṣi raghunāyaka pāsā. pūm̐chata kahata navala itihāsā. 6.
taba madhubana bhītara saba ā'ē. aṅgada sammata madhu phala khā'ē. 7.
rakhavārē jaba barajana lāgē. muṣṭi prahāra hanata saba bhāgē. 8.

Now presently this jubilant group set off on its way back to where Lord Ram was. On the way back the monkeys and the bears chatted merrily amongst themselves, asking Hanuman more details about his journey and the experiences that he has had in that alien land, which he shared with them gleefully. (6)

By-and-by they reached the forest that had a large number of fruit trees laden with honeycombs, hence called the 'Madhuvan'. There, upon being granted permission by Angad, the whole group enjoyed eating sweet fruits and drinking honey to their heart's content. (7)

When the forest guards tried to prevent them (from rampaging in the well-tended forest), they (the monkeys and bears) hit the guards with their fists, as a result of which the latter fled from the sight.¹ (8)

[Note—¹This 'Madhuvan' was the royal forest of the king of Kishkindha, i.e. of Sugriv, hence it was out of bounds for ordinary subjects of the kingdom. Our group of messengers of Lord Ram and Sugriv, led by Hanuman, the hero, Angad, the leader of the team and the crown prince, and Jamvant, the elderly bear who was their emotional

support and advisor, was very excited and exceptionally happy at this point of time as they had done a marvelous job assigned to them, having achieved a singular success which was likely to please their king Sugriv as well as their Lord Sri Ram immensely.

They were so happy and confident rendered by their success that they were convinced that Sugriv would never get angry at them or punish them for this little mischief of eating and drinking in the royal garden; they would explain to him that they were very hungry and thirsty, and being their king's favourite subjects they thought that they had the right to eat and drink in the royal forest to refresh themselves after the arduous and tiring journey that they had undertaken, and the difficulties that they had encountered while searching for Sita. They were sure that Sugriv would excuse them. This view is endorsed in Doha no. 28 that follows herein below.

Besides that confidence, they had the permission of Angad, who was the crown prince and their leader, and therefore he had the right to enter and seek pleasure in the royal forest much like the king, Sugriv, had himself. So there was no problem.

Of course these monkeys and bears could have been more disciplined, but they were so excited and happy that they threw all caution to the wind, and behaving like jubilant children let loose in a garden full of fruit trees and honeycombs, they ran amok through the forest. And like these excited children, they hit back at the guards when they objected.]

दो०. जाइ पुकारे ते सब बन उजार जुबराज ।

सुनि सुग्रीव हरष कपि करि आए प्रभु काज ॥ २८ ॥

dōhā.

jā'i pukārē tē saba bana ujāra jubarāja.

sunī sugrīva haraṣa kapi kari ā'ē prabhu kāja. 28.

The guards ran to the capital to report the developments to their king Sugriv. They were almost out of their breath as they burst out, 'Oh Lord, the crown prince (Angad) has led the group that has ruined the forest.'

Hearing this good tiding, Sugriv felt very happy as he deduced that this development clearly, and without a trace of doubt, meant that the Kapis have indeed been successfully in doing Lord Ram's work (for otherwise they would not have had the temerity to destroy his favourite forest). (Doha no. 28)

चौ०. जौं न होति सीता सुधि पाई । मधुबन के फल सकहिं कि खाई ॥ १ ॥

एहि बिधि मन बिचार कर राजा । आइ गए कपि सहित समाजा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

jauṁ na hōti sītā sudhi pā'ī. madhubana kē phala sakahī ki khā'ī. 1.

ēhi bidhi mana bicāra kara rājā. ā'i ga'ē kapi sahita samājā. 2.

Sugriv said to himself, 'Had they not known about the whereabouts of Sita, would they have dared to eat the fruits of the Madhuvan?'

[To wit, it is sure that they have found Sita, for otherwise it is not at all reasonable to think that they would ever dare to eat fruits and drink honey by raiding my forest. Quite the contrary, for in case they had failed to locate her they would either not have come here at all, or would have been far too scared for fear of their lives to have the mind to enjoy eating fruits. So therefore, certainly they have attained success in their mission. Excellent; I will definitely forgive them for ruining the forest at least, if I can't reward them with anything else.]" (1)

In this way, while the king (Sugriv) was thus contemplating, the Kapis (i.e. Hanuman as well as Angad) arrived there; they were accompanied by all the other members of the group¹. (2)

[Note—¹Surely a large number of other monkeys and bears, the citizens of Kishkindha, must have joined this jubilant group as it headed towards the royal court of Sugriv to report. The news of their arrival must have spread like wildfire when the forest guards came in shouting and exclaiming about the affair of the ruining of the forest by Angad-led troops. Every single individual who was left in the capital was expecting news about this team, and when this news came it came with such a bang that it created quite a flutter in the city.

By-and-by when the exuberant team headed by Hanuman, the 'hero', with Angad and Jamvant behind him and followed by other members of the group, reached the place where Sugriv waited for them, a huge milling crowd had gathered. There was a cry of congratulation and a spontaneous outburst of applause that reverberated everywhere in and around the capital.]

आइ सबन्हि नावा पद सीसा । मिलेउ सबन्हि अति प्रेम कपीसा ॥ ३ ॥

पूँछी कुसल कुसल पद देखी । राम कृपाँ भा काजु बिसेषी ॥ ४ ॥

नाथ काजु कीन्हेउ हनुमाना । राखे सकल कपिन्ह के प्राना ॥ ५ ॥

सुनि सुग्रीव बहुरि तेहि मिलेऊ । कपिन्ह सहित रघुपति पहिं चलेऊ ॥ ६ ॥

ā'i sabanhi nāvā pada sīsā. milē'u sabanhi atī prēma kapīsā. 3.

pūm'chī kusala kusala pada dēkhī. rāma krpām' bhā kāju bisēṣī. 4.

nātha kāju kīnhē'u hanumānā. rākhē sakala kapinha kē prānā. 5.

sunī sugrīva bahuri tēhi milē'ū. kapinha sahita raghupati pahim calē'ū. 6.

All of them (i.e. all the members of the team) came and bowed their heads before Sugriv, and the king of the monkey race (kapīsā; Sugriv) welcomed them most cordially, meeting them all affectionately. (3)

Then Sugriv asked about their welfare, at which they replied, 'We are indeed fortunate to have come back to see you and pay our respects at your feet. By the grace of Lord Ram, the special work (kāju bisēṣī) that had been assigned to us has been done successfully¹. (4)

Oh Lord, Hanuman has done this work remarkably well, and by doing so he has been able to save the life of all us Kapis². (5)

When Sugriv heard of this news, he met Hanuman once again affectionately to congratulate him. Then all of them proceeded to the place where Lord Ram dwelt³. (6)

[Note—¹When a large number of monkey and bear troops had assembled at Mt. Prabarshan, a general order was given to them—to form teams or groups and go in every direction to search for Sita. One such group consisted of Angad, Jamvant and Hanuman amongst others. This was the privileged team who was ordered to proceed in the south direction. Out of its members, Hanuman was singled out by Lord Ram, who called him aside and gave him his finger-ring as well as the confidential message that he was to convey to Sita.

Hence, this particular team had been given a special status, and one of its members, i.e. Hanuman, was given a special mandate by Lord Ram himself. That is why they call success in this mission as something ‘very special’.

²Though it is not specifically mentioned here who spoke on behalf of the group, but in all probability it was Angad, as he was the leader of this team. This fact, that he was the leader of this team, is clearly mentioned by Jamvant in Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 30.

He was alluding to Sugriv’s threat that he would kill them if they failed to find Sita—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 22.

³Lord Ram was living on Mt. Pravarshan all the while—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 12 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-10 that precede it. So the merry team, led by Sugriv, went to meet the Lord atop Mt. Pravarshan.]

राम कपिन्ह जब आवत देखा । किँ काजु मन हरष बिसेषा ॥ ७ ॥
फटिक सिला बैठे द्वौ भाई । परे सकल कपि चरनन्हि जाई ॥ ८ ॥

rāma kapinha jaba āvata dēkhā. ki'ēm' kāju mana haraṣa bisēṣā. 7.
phaṭika silā baiṭhē dvau bhā'ī. parē sakala kapi carananhī jā'ī. 8.

When Lord Ram observed that all the Kapis were coming to meet him, and perceived that they were joyous and effused confidence, he concluded that they had successfully done the assigned work. This made the Lord feel happy in his heart. (7)

The two brothers (Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman) were sitting on a rock of crystal. All the Kapis came and fell down at their feet to pay their respect to them. (8)

दो०. प्रीति सहित सब भेटे रघुपति करुना पुंज ।
पूँछी कुसल नाथ अब कुसल देखि पद कंज ॥ २९ ॥
dōhā.

prīti sahita saba bhēṭē raghupati karunā punjā.
pūm̐chī kusala nātha aba kusala dēkhi pada kanjā. 29.

Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram), who is a fount of compassion, mercy and grace (raghupati karunā punjā), met all of them very affectionately.

He asked them about their well-being, to which they all replied, ‘Oh Lord, everything is good and fortunate for us now that we have come back to see your lotus-like (holy) feet.’ (Doha no. 29)

चौ०. जामवंत कह सुनु रघुराया । जा पर नाथ करहु तुम्ह दाया ॥ १ ॥
ताहि सदा सुभ कुसल निरंतर । सुर नर मुनि प्रसन्न ता ऊपर ॥ २ ॥
सोइ बिजई बिनई गुन सागर । तासु सुजसु त्रैलोक उजागर ॥ ३ ॥
caupāī.

jā mavanta kaha sunu raghurāyā. jā para nātha karahu tumha dāyā. 1.
tāhi sadā subha kusala nirantara. sura nara muni prasanna tā ūpara. 2.
sō'i bijaī binaī guna sāgara. tāsu sujasu trailōka ujāgara. 3.

Jamvant (the eldest and the wisest member of this fortunate team and the king of the bear community) came forward to report to Lord Ram. He said, ‘Listen oh Lord of the Raghus (“raghurāyā”; Lord Ram, the illustrious descendant of great king Raghu of Ayodhya). Oh Lord, he upon whom you show your grace and benevolence [1] ---

--- Such a fortunate person as he is constantly and always, without exception, assured of good fortunes and well-being at all times; there is no doubt about it. Verily indeed, in all sooth and without any gainsay, all the gods and all the human beings, whether they are ordinary men or exalted sages, are favourably inclined towards him, and are happy with such a person [2]. (1-2)

Indeed, such a fortunate person is truly blessed with victory and success; he is deemed to be well mannered and cultured, as well as a treasure of all the excellent virtues one ought to possess. Verily, the fame and glory of this fortunate person shines throughout the world, in all its three divisions (such as the heaven, the earth and the nether world).¹ (3)

[Note—¹Wise and erudite, and acquainted with court etiquette as well as good manners as he was, Jamvant knew well how to address great kings and be courteous in their presence. So here he shows his finesse of manners and good behaviour by conducting this discourse in an excellent way by first honouring Lord Ram himself before proceeding to narrate the developments and give the news of Sita. If, instead, he had gone straight away to describe the stellar achievement of Hanuman in finding Sita, and the miraculous way he had burnt Lanka to avenge for Sita’s abduction, then to some extent it would have seemed a bit un-courteous and a sort of bragging on behalf of Lord Ram’s hosts, king Sugriv and his monkey-and-bear race in general.

Good culture and good manners entail that the guest himself is shown honour first before anything is said of the host; the host always says that he feels honoured to have the concerned person as his guest; it is his privilege to be able to serve his guest.]

प्रभु कीं कृपा भयउ सबु काजू । जन्म हमार सुफल भा आजू ॥ ४ ॥
नाथ पवनसुत कीन्हि जो करनी । सहसहुँ मुख न जाइ सो बरनी ॥ ५ ॥

prabhu kīṁ kṛpā bhaya'u sabu kājū. janma hamāra suphala bhā ājū. 4.
nātha pavanasuta kīnhi jō karani. sahasahum' mukha na jā'i sō baranī. 5.

By the grace of the Lord, all the work has been successfully done, and in having done it we all feel that our lives have been fruitful and duly rewarded. (4)

Oh Lord, it is the son of the wind god (i.e. Hanuman) who deserves all the credit, for what he has done is so gallant, so astounding, so stupendous, so marvelous and so magnificent that it cannot be described in its totality even if one were to attempt to do so with a thousand mouths¹.

[To wit, Hanuman has brought immense laurels to the entire Kapi community; he has shown exceptional skill, strength, valour and courage in fulfillment of this mission, which I am glad to say, has made us all proud and happy. We are here because of him, for otherwise we would have been so ashamed of ourselves at our failure that we would have rather died than come here to show our faces to you. Whatever amount of praise is given to Hanuman would be little in the view of what he has achieved. Indeed, we are all very grateful to him.]' (5)

[Note—¹This is a figure of speech to stress the importance and the magnitude of the achievement of Hanuman. Surely it was not a joke to cross the mighty ocean and land on an island 800 miles away from the shore. It was not an ordinary island, but one that was firmly secured and teeming with ferocious demons; its king was Ravana who was so mighty and powerful that even the gods trembled by his mere name. Going to this invincible fort alone, entering it and successfully finding Sita against all odds and overcoming all sorts of dangers, battering the demon army and virtually decimating it, killing Ravana's son Akshayakumar, fearlessly facing Ravana himself and humiliating him in front of his full court crowded with armed demon soldiers, and then burning the city of Lanka and returning unscathed—was definitely not a child's play by any stretch of imagination. It was indeed a stupendous deed and an astounding achievement that deserved all the praise that one can assign to it, for no one had ever imagined that it can actually be done even in one's wildest of dreams. In one single sortie, and that too alone, Hanuman had brought the mighty enemy to heel.]

पवनतनय के चरित सुहाए । जामवंत रघुपतिहि सुनाए ॥ ६ ॥
सुनत कृपानिधि मन अति भाए । पुनि हनुमान हरषि हियँ लाए ॥ ७ ॥
कहहु तात केहि भाँति जानकी । रहति करति रच्छा स्वप्नान की ॥ ८ ॥

pavanatanaya kē carita suhā'ē. jāmavanta raghupatihi sunā'ē. 6.
sunata kṛpānidhi mana ati bhā'ē. puni hanumāna haraṣi hiyaṁ' lā'ē. 7.

kahahu tāta kēhi bhām̐ti jānakī. rahati karati racchā svaprāna kī. 8.

After this courteous introduction, Jamvant narrated to Lord Ram all the wonderful things that Hanuman had done. (6)

When Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, grace and compassion (krpānidhi), heard the details, he was very pleased in his heart. Then he called Hanuman near and embraced him most affectionately. (7)

The Lord said, ‘Tell me my dear (tāta), how is Janki (Sita), and how she manages to sustain her life in hostile conditions.’¹ (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram well knew that Sita lived at a place teeming with blood-thirsty ferocious demons, and these demons derived sadistic pleasure in torture and cruelty. So the environment in which she lived was certainly ‘hostile’. The Lord wondered how she managed to survive in this situation. In the next set of verses we shall read how Hanuman answers this question.]

दो०. नाम पाहरू दिवस निसि ध्यान तुम्हार कपाट ।
लोचन निज पद जंत्रित जाहिं प्रान केहिं बाट ॥ ३० ॥

dōhā.

nāma pāharū divasa nisi dhyāna tumhāra kapāṭa.
lōcana nija pada jantrita jāhiṁ prāna kēhiṁ bāṭa. 30.

[Hanuman replied poignantly—] ‘Oh Lord, your name is like the guard who keeps vigil day and night, and your thought is the door at which this guard stands on duty.

Her eyes are downcast and looking fixedly at her feet. Say then, by which path her Pran (life forces) can leave her body?

[To wit, Sita sits like a hermitess immersed in deep meditation and engrossed in profound contemplation. She has enshrined the image of her beloved Lord Ram in her heart, which image she uses as a deity to whom an ascetic offers all his worship and efforts of spiritual practices; she employs the holy name of the Lord, the word “Ram”, as a Mantra, a divine formula, which the ascetic employs for his meditation; she thinks of the Lord like the way the ascetic does contemplation; and like the ascetic who sits for long hours with half-open eyes with his sight and mind focused on something very subtle and sublime and ethereal, something that is far removed from this gross, mundane and physical world, living in this world dispassionately and detached from all its affairs but appearing to do its routine affairs like a puppet, Sita too remains focused in the thoughts of Lord Ram to keep herself sane and retain life inside her emaciated body, while her half-opened and tired eyes are fixed on her feet because the fairy of sleep evades her.] (Doha no. 30)

[Note—Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 29 (b), and Sundar Kand, Doha no. 7 along with Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes it. In these verses we have read that Sita spent her days remembering the image of Lord Ram that she had last observed, of the Lord running behind the golden deer, an image that she had sacredly enshrined in her heart, and was muttering the Lord’s holy name “Ram”

constantly; she was emaciated, forlorn and despondent; and she remained seated with her eyes fixed on her feet, almost like a statue.

In this Doha, Hanuman describes succinctly how Sita spends her time in captivity in Lanka—she sits sitting quietly, full of despair and despondency; she looks fixedly at her feet; her mind is always fixed in the thoughts of Lord Ram as she remembers him at all the moments of her existence; and she continuously repeats the Lord’s name “Ram, Ram” as no other thought enters her mind.

Hanuman paints this sad, poignant and pitiful portrait of Sita for Lord Ram to impress upon him how she constantly remembers him during the days of her captivity. He wished to convey to the Lord that she was in a very sorry state; she brooded and was lost in thoughts as she sat motionless like a statue—this is how she passed her days and nights. How is a ‘statue’ expected to lose its life, for it shows no sign of life in the first place? Sita’s breathing has become very short and shallow; her eyes don’t seem to blink as they are fixed on her feet or the ground before her; her body shows no signs of activity as her mind is lost in deep meditation. So is she not virtually like a ‘statue’? But she is not actually an ordinary ‘statue’ made of stone, for she is a ‘living statue’ in as much as she does have life in her body; she actually breathes, thinks and sees. She, in fact, is a ‘consecrated statue’—as Lord Ram is enshrined inside her heart and mind; her whole being is shrouded by the Holy Spirit of Lord Ram.]

चौ०. चलत मोहि चूड़ामनि दीन्ही । रघुपति हृदयँ लाइ सोइ लीन्ही ॥ १ ॥

नाथ जुगल लोचन भरि बारी । बचन कहे कछु जनककुमारी ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

calata mōhi cūrāmani dīnhī. raghupati hṛdayam’lā’i sō’i līnhī. 1.

nātha jugala lōcana bhari bārī. bacana kahē kachu janakakumārī. 2.

At the time of my departure she gave me the jewel she wore on her head, the jewel called ‘Chudamani’.

[Then Hanuman showed Lord Ram this token which he had brought with him. The Lord immediately recognized it as the one that belonged to Sita, and this made him profoundly nostalgic even as he was overcome with grief accentuated by sweet memories of her.]

Lord Ram instantly took the Chudamani from Hanuman most affectionately, and held it close to his heart. (1)

Hanuman continued with his report of Sita as follows: ‘Lord, the daughter of Janak (“janakakumārī”; Sita)¹ filled her eyes with tears when she said a few words by way of a message for you. (2)

[Note—¹When Lord Ram met Hanuman on his return from Lanka, he had also asked about Sita using this same alias for her; the Lord had asked how “Janki” was. The word ‘Janki’ also means ‘the daughter of king Janak’. Refer—Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 30.

So therefore, Hanuman thought it wise to use a similar term for Sita because the Lord preferred to hear about her in that way.]

अनुज समेत गहेहु प्रभु चरना । दीन बंधु प्रनतारति हरना ॥ ३ ॥
 मन क्रम बचन चरन अनुरागी । केहिं अपराध नाथ हौं त्यागी ॥ ४ ॥
 अवगुन एक मोर मैं माना । बिछुरत प्राण न कीन्ह पयाना ॥ ५ ॥
 नाथ सो नयनन्हि को अपराधा । निसरत प्राण करहिं हठि बाधा ॥ ६ ॥
 बिरह अगिनि तनु तूल समीरा । स्वास जरइ छन माहिं सरीरा ॥ ७ ॥
 नयन स्रवहिं जलु निज हित लागी । जरैं न पाव देह बिरहागी ॥ ८ ॥

anuja samēta gahēhu prabhu caranā. dīna bandhu pranatārati haranā. 3.
 mana krama bacana carana anurāgī. kēhim aparādha nātha haurm tyāgī. 4.
 avaguna ēka mōra mairm mānā. bichurata prāna na kīnha payānā. 5.
 nātha sō nayanānhi kō aparādha. nisarata prāna karahim haṭhi bādhā. 6.
 biraha agini tanu tūla samīrā. svāsa jara'i chana māhim sarīrā. 7.
 nayana sravahim jalu nija hita lāgī. jaraim na pāva dēha birahāgī. 8.

[After describing her pitiful condition, Hanuman now conveys Sita's sorrowful message in these poignant words—] She said to me, 'Hold the feet of the Lord as well as his younger brother (Laxman)¹ on my behalf, and plead, "Oh Lord, you are a friend of those who are distressed and ill-fortuned (dīna bandhu); you are the one who removes fear and sorrows of those who surrender themselves before you and take shelter at your feet (pranatārati haranā). (3)

{Then, turning to Lord Ram, say this to him on my behalf—} Oh Lord, I am your faithful maid by my Mana (mind and heart), by my deeds, and by my words, so why then have you abandoned me, for what crime or error have you forsaken me? Why is it that you have been so indifferent towards my sufferings, even though you are renowned as being a Lord who extends instant protection to those who are devoted to you, who love you, and who are totally dependent upon you for everything? (4)

Of course I agree that there has been one fault on my part—and that single fault is that my Pran (life forces) did not leave me as soon as I was separated from you. [To wit, I agree that I did commit a mistake by not dying the instant I was separated from you. But I have an explanation for it.] (5)

Lord, it is the fault of my eyes that they stubbornly resist whenever my Pran (life) wishes to leave my body. (6)

{Now she explains how her eyes prevent her from dying in the following two verses.}

The grief of separation is like a raging fire, the body is like the cotton, and the breath is like the air that can fan the fire and help it to erupt and consume my body by burning it to ash. (7)

But the eyes constantly shower water (in the form of my tears) on this fire, out of its own wants, thereby dousing it every time the flame leaps up. This is why, and how, my body is not able to burn itself in the raging fire of separation (from you).

[And what does the eye 'want'? It hopes that one day it will be able to see your divine form once again! This wish, this longing, this hope and desire, keeps the

eye wide awake even as it stubbornly prevents my life from leaving my body by constantly dripping tears to cool the fire of grief and agony. To wit my Lord, I weep day and night, and my tears cool my body; as for my breath it is so shallow and lacking in sufficient force that my life can't leave my body via that route too. What can I do if my mind keeps hoping to meet you again, and it instructs my eyes to pour tear on the fire of grief and agony to keep it under control to prevent it from ruining the prospects of my meeting you again?]" ' (8)

[Note—¹Why did Sita wished Hanuman to hold Laxman's feet also to plead on her behalf? It is because she asked Laxman to forgive her for not obeying his advice not to force him to leave her alone at the time Lord Ram had gone behind the deer and a loud cry was heard mimicking Lord Ram's voice calling out Laxman's name. At that time Sita had forced Laxman to go and help the Lord inspite of his telling her that it was a trick as no harm can ever befall the Lord, and inspite of the Lord himself instructing Laxman not to leave Sita alone as the forest is teeming with demons. Yet when Sita persisted, Laxman was forced to go away, and this resulted in her being abducted by Ravana. These incidents are narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, (a) Chaupai line nos. 8-9 that precede Doha no. 27; (b) Chaupai Doha no. 28 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-16 that precede it.

So therefore, by asking Hanuman to hold Laxman's and Lord Ram's feet on her behalf, Sita wishes to ask for forgiveness from them both.]

सीता कै अति बिपति बिसाला । बिनहिं कहें भलि दीनदयाला ॥ ९ ॥

sītā kai ati bipati bisālā. binahim kahēm bhali dīnadayālā. 9.

[After telling Lord Ram what Sita had conveyed, Hanuman summarizes her trauma and pitiful condition by making this poignant observation—] 'Oh merciful and compassionate Lord (dīnadayālā)! Sita's troubles are so immense, so intense and so uncountable that it is well they are not told in detail. (9)

दो०. निमिष निमिष करुनानिधि जाहिं कलप सम बीति ।

बेगि चलिअ प्रभु आनिअ भुज बल खल दल जीति ॥ ३१ ॥

dōhā.

nimiṣa nimiṣa karunānidhi jāhim kalapa sama bīti.

bēgi cali'a prabhu āni'a bhuja bala khala dala jīti. 31.

Oh graceful Lord who is like an ocean of compassion and mercy (karunānidhi)! Each moment that passes is equivalent to a Kalpa for her. [The Kalpa is a very long period of time, and it covers one cycle of creation and destruction.]

So therefore, make haste and start quickly to go and bring her back by vanquishing the wicked hordes of enemy by the formidable might of your arms.' (Doha no. 31)

[Note—In this concluding statement, Hanuman earnestly pleads on behalf of Sita by giving this advice to Lord Ram: No time ought to be lost by Lord Ram in launching a campaign to free Sita from the captivity of the demons by conquering them using force. By addressing Lord Ram as the one “who is an ocean of mercy and compassion”, Hanuman intends to tell him that he should be mindful of his own reputation on this count and show grace upon Sita even if she had made some mistakes, for he ought to forgive her as she has pleaded for forgiveness herself. Besides this, the Lord is a friend of the distressed and of those who surrender themselves at his feet, asking for his protection. So there is no reason why the Lord should delay in starting the rescue operation forthwith.]

चौ०. सुनि सीता दुख प्रभु सुख अयना । भरि आए जल राजिव नयना ॥ १ ॥
 बचन कायँ मन मम गति जाही । सपनेहुँ बूझिअ बिपति कि ताही ॥ २ ॥
 caupāṭi.

sunī sītā dukha prabhu sukha ayanā. bhari ā'ē jala rājiva nayanā. 1.
 bacana kāyam' mana mama gati jāhī. sapanēhum' būjhi'a bipati ki tāhī. 2.

When the Lord who is ever blissful himself and a granter of bliss to others (prabhu sukha ayanā) heard of the miseries and grief of Sita, tears welled up in his eyes. (1)

He exclaimed, ‘How can troubles, adversities and miseries ever come to someone who has surrendered oneself to me by one’s Vachan (words), Karma (deeds) and Mana (mind and heart; thoughts and emotions)?’¹ (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram was responding to Hanuman’s narrative about Sita’s miserable state of affairs. Hanuman had given a very pitiful portrait of Sita to Lord Ram and made it clear to the Lord how Sita is completely loyal and devoted to him; how she constantly remembers him, how she mutters the Lord’s name every moment of her life and sheds tears in his remembrance, how she expressed her emotions and paid her obeisance to the Lord at the time of his departure, and also explained to the Lord why she does not die in grief of separation—apropos of Doha no. 30—to Doha no. 31 herein above.

This brief narration was so touching that it overwhelmed Lord Ram. It was obvious that Sita was suffering immensely inspite of her surrender to the Lord as well as her unquestioned loyalty and devotion for him. This was too much for the Lord to bear, for this goes against his own glorious reputation—which says that anyone who has surrendered himself to Lord Ram and is completely devoted to him by his words, deeds, mind and heart can be sure of the Lord’s protection under all conditions.

So, Lord Ram was unable to restrain himself as he felt that his honour and good name was at stake, and he made the remark as quoted in this particular verse. In effect it was a hint to all who were listening that no further time should be wasted, for the Lord is ready for action at that very instant, and hence the mission to free Sita should start forthwith. Hanuman picked up this clue immediately; he understood that the Lord is giving a signal to launch the campaign without the loss of any time. This will be evident in the next set of verses—where he assures the Lord that the real trouble for the creature is when he forgets the Lord and does not have devotion for him, but the situation here is quite the contrary for Sita is totally devoted to the Lord

and remembers him every moment of her life. In her case it is a simple matter of going and freeing her by vanquishing her captors; it is no great deal, and neither does it merit such despondency and worry as Lord Ram seems to have.]

कह हनुमंत बिपति प्रभु सोई । जब तव सुमिरन भजन न होई ॥ ३ ॥
केतिक बात प्रभु जातुधान की । रिपुहि जीति आनिबी जानकी ॥ ४ ॥

kaha hanumanta bipati prabhu sō'ī. jaba tava sumirana bhajana na hō'ī. 3.
kētika bāta prabhu jātudhāna kī. ripuhi jīti ānibī jānakī. 4.

Hanuman assuaged Lord Ram's feelings of sorrow at Sita's sufferings by saying these comforting words, 'Oh Lord, the real trouble, the real misfortune, the real source of grief and misery for a creature is when one does not remember you (or when one forgets you), and when one does not worship you, adore you, and have devotion for you. (3)

Oh Lord! What is the great deal with respect to the demons; how do they matter to you? It is a simple matter of vanquishing them and bringing Sita back.

[Oh Lord, there is nothing simpler than this. Till now, of course, there was some cause of worry as we did not know where Sita was, but now that everything is known, the rest is all easy. So why do you worry and express so much dismay?] (4)

सुनु कपि तोहि समान उपकारी । नहिं कोउ सुर नर मुनि तनुधारी ॥ ५ ॥
प्रति उपकार करौं का तोरा । सनमुख होइ न सकत मन मोरा ॥ ६ ॥
सुनु सुत तोहि उरिन मैं नाहीं । देखेउँ करि बिचार मन माहीं ॥ ७ ॥
पुनि पुनि कपिहि चितव सुरत्राता । लोचन नीर पुलक अति गाता ॥ ८ ॥

sunu kapi tōhi samāna upakārī. nahim kō'u sura nara muni tanudhārī. 5.
prati upakāra karaum kā tōrā. sanamukha hō'i na sakata mana mōrā. 6.
sunu suta tōhi urina mairm nāhīm. dēkhē'um' kari bicāra mana māhīm. 7.
puni puni kapihi citava suratrātā. lōcana nīra pulaka ati gātā. 8.

[Lord Ram felt very glad at hearing Hanuman's words of reassurance and courage. The Lord felt very obliged to him, and he expressed his deep sense of gratitude and thanks to him in the following words—]

'Listen Kapi (Hanuman)! There is no one amongst the gods, humans, sages, or any other living being to whom I feel so grateful and thankful today; I am indeed obliged of you. (5)

I don't know how I shall be able to recompense you in full for what you have done for me. Truly, my mind and heart (Mana) fail to advice me on this account. (6)

Listen my dear son (sunu suta)! The more I think of it the more I am convinced that I shall never be able to repay your debts, and I shall ever remain indebted to you!' (7)

The Lord, who is the protector of the gods (*suratrātā*), glanced repeatedly at Hanuman with a lot of affection in his eyes even as tears (of joy and gratefulness) welled up in them, and his body was so thrilled that hairs stood on their ends.*

[*This verse can be read in another way also as follows: “The Lord, who is the protector of the gods, glanced repeatedly at Hanuman with a lot of affection in his eyes, even as tears (of joy and gratefulness) welled up in the eyes of Hanuman and his body was so thrilled that hairs stood on their ends.”]¹ (8)

[Note—¹In these verses, Lord Ram has expressed his deep sense of gratitude to Hanuman. Indeed Hanuman was so fortunate that both Lord Ram and Sita have shown great affection for him, called him their ‘son’ (*suta*), and liberally blessed him. We have read here presently how Lord Ram articulated his great appreciation of Hanuman and showed favour to him, and earlier we have read how Sita had also liberally blessed him—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 17.

We can remark here that there is a special bond between the Lord God and his ardent devotees. Both feel exhilarated in each other’s presence; the sentiment of affection and love is mutual between them. So therefore, it is natural that both Lord Ram and his devotee Hanuman should become highly emotional so much so that tears well up in the eyes of both, and both their bodies become thrilled in each other’s presence.

It is a sort of mutual respect for each other—the Lord God shows his appreciation for his devotee who sacrifices all and everything in this world for his beloved Lord, and the devotee shows his appreciation for the Lord who inspite of being the ‘Almighty Supreme Emperor of this creation’ goes out of his way to show affection for a humble devotee, protect him against all odds, and treats him most favourably inspite of his numerous shortcomings.]

दो०. सुनि प्रभु बचन बिलोकि मुख गात हरषि हनुमंत ।
चरन परेउ प्रेमाकुल त्राहि त्राहि भगवंत ॥ ३२ ॥

dōhā.

suni prabhu bacana bilōki mukha gāta haraṣi hanumanta.
carana parēu prēmākula trāhi trāhi bhagavanta. 32.

Hearing the (affectionate and polite) words of Lord Ram and observing that his countenance revealed that the Lord was favourable to him, Hanuman’s body was thrilled with joy.

Feeling overwhelmed by a surge of love and affection for the Lord, Hanuman fell down at his feet and exclaimed repeatedly, ‘Oh my revered Lord (*bhagavanta*), give protection to me (from feeling proud and having ego).’ (Doha no. 32)

[Note—There was a huge crowd of monkeys and bears who were watching the proceedings. Earlier it was Jamvant and now it is Lord Ram who has singled out Hanuman for such glorious praise. So he feels humbled by this honour, and in his modesty he fell down at the Lord’s feet to pray that the vice of ego and pride may not touch him.]

चौ०. बार बार प्रभु चहइ उठावा । प्रेम मगन तेहि उठब न भावा ॥ १ ॥

प्रभु कर पंकज कपि केँ सीसा । सुमिरि सो दसा मगन गौरीसा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

bāra bāra prabhu caha'i uṭhāvā. prēma magana tēhi uṭhaba na bhāvā. 1.
prabhu kara pañkaja kapi kēṁ sīsā. sumiri sō dasā magana gaurīsā. 2.

The Lord tried repeatedly to lift Hanuman from his prostrate position, but the latter was so emotionally overwhelmed that he resisted all the attempts of the Lord to lift him, as he did not wish to let go of the Lord's holy feet (which he had clasped with his hands). (1)

Remembering this sublime scene of Lord Ram's lotus-like hands resting on the head of the Kapi (Hanuman), Lord Shiva ("gaurīsā"; the Lord of goddess Gauri) became so overwhelmed with emotions that for some moments he was lost in a reverie of ecstasy, losing awareness of everything else.¹ (2)

[Note—¹It ought to be noted that Lord Shiva is the chief and the primary narrator of the story of 'Ram Charit Manas' which we are reading here. He was the one who had first visualized and conceived this divine story of Lord Ram's deeds in his Mana (heart and mind) while meditating, and this is why this story got the name "Ram Charit Manas". He then narrated it to his divine consort who has many names, one of which is "Gauri", and the other more popular ones are Uma and Parvati. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30.}]

Shiva is known to be a great devotee of Lord Ram. So whenever an episode is being narrated where the close relationship between Lord Ram and his devotee, such as the case of Hanuman here, is the subject matter of the discourse, one which highlights their mutual sense of affection and love for each other as well as the intensity of devotion that the devotee has for the Lord and his adoration of the Lord, Lord Shiva becomes highly emotional and ecstatic himself.]

सावधान मन करि पुनि संकर । लागे कहन कथा अति सुंदर ॥ ३ ॥

कपि उठाइ प्रभु हृदयँ लगावा । कर गहि परम निकट बैठावा ॥ ४ ॥

sāvadhāna mana kari puni sañkara. lāgē kahana kathā ati sundara. 3.
kapi uṭhā'i prabhu hṛdayam' lagāvā. kara gahi parama nikaṭa baiṭhāvā. 4.

Lord Shiva recovered his composure and controlled his mind to resume the narrative which was very beautiful and pleasant (to hear and to narrate, as it gave pleasure to the listener as well as the narrator)¹. (3)

Finally (after great effort), the Lord lifted Kapi (Hanuman) and embraced him, holding him close to his bosom. Then the Lord held his hand and made him sit very close to him (like a true and a dear friend). (4)

[Note—¹Just how glorious, divine, spiritually fulfilling and fascinating this narrative of “Ram Charit Manas” is have been enumerated in its Baal Kand, (i) from Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 31—to Doha no. 33; and (ii) from Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 35—to Doha no. 39.]

कहु कपि रावन पालित लंका । केहि बिधि दहेउ दुर्ग अति बंका ॥ ५ ॥
प्रभु प्रसन्न जाना हनुमाना । बोला बचन बिगत अभिमाना ॥ ६ ॥

kahu kapi rāvana pālita laṅkā. kēhi bidhi dahē'u durga ati baṅkā. 5.
prabhu prasanna jānā hanumānā. bōlā bacana bigata abhimānā. 6.

[Now, Lord Ram enquired about Lanka and how Hanuman managed to burn its formidable fort.]

Lord Ram asked Hanuman, ‘Tell me Kapi about Lanka, which is ruled and protected by its king Ravana. Tell me how you managed to burn its fort which is reputed to be very formidable and extremely impregnable.

[Since Lanka and its fort are so strong and inaccessible, I am really amazed how you achieved this rare feat of not only penetrating it to enter and meet Sita, but also burning it, which is all the more stunning as you have done all this single-handedly, without any help, and without getting hurt. It’s astonishing and incredible really. So please tell me more of it.]’ (5)

Perceiving that Lord Ram was very pleased by his actions¹, Hanuman replied without even a trace of pride or haughtiness in his voice or manners. (6)

[Note—¹Initially Hanuman was afraid that his action of burning Lanka without the express permission of Lord Ram, Sugriv or Jamvant may not be liked by either of them, but on finding that all had welcomed him enthusiastically and shown great appreciation for his actions, he felt relieved. Especially when he found that Lord Ram has shown so much happiness at his actions, and the way Jamvant had eulogized him, he regained his confidence.

But it goes to Hanuman’s credit that this unequivocal and universal praise for him did not go into his head and make him puffed-up; he remained humble and modest. Haughtiness, egoism, pride and arrogance did not touch his mind and heart.]

साखामृग कै बड़ि मनुसाई । साखा तें साखा पर जाई ॥ ७ ॥
नाघि सिंधु हाटकपुर जारा । निसिचर गन बधि बिपिन उजारा ॥ ८ ॥
सो सब तव प्रताप रघुराई । नाथ न कछू मोरि प्रभुताई ॥ ९ ॥

sākhāmṛga kai baḍi manusā'ī. sākhā tēm sākhā para jā'ī. 7.
nāghi sindhu hāṭakapura jārā. nīsicara gana badhi bipina ujārā. 8.
sō saba tava pratāpa raghurā'ī. nātha na kachū mōri prabhutā'ī. 9.

[Showing extreme sense of humbleness and modesty, Hanuman said—] ‘It is a common thing for those who dwell on the trees like a monkey does (*sākhāmṛga*) to jump from one branch of a tree to another; it is their natural habit, even if one prefers to call this simple act of theirs as something great or rare. (7)

It is out of this natural habit that I managed to cross the ocean by leaping across it, burn the golden city of Lanka (by jumping across its buildings), kill the demon warriors and destroy the (Ashok) garden. [To wit, I do not deserve much praise for these deeds, for I did them in a natural way, for such actions are like a sport for Kapis, or tree dwelling monkeys, like me.] (8)

And even if it is said that doing such stupendous deeds as enumerated above are something special, something great and very rare to do, then let it be known that all of them were successfully done due to your grace and blessings, and truly oh Lord, I have no claim to glory and honour for achieving success in doing any of them. All the credit should go to you and your grace, for I have indeed done nothing relying on my own strength and power.¹ (9)

[Note—¹This is an excellent example of modesty, and how a true devotee credits his Lord God for all the success that he gets in any enterprise in his life. This is how true devotion should be—that the devotee feels that all his achievements are the result of his Lord God’s grace and blessings, and that he deserves nothing on his own merit.]

दो०. ता कहूँ प्रभु कछु अगम नहिं जा पर तुम्ह अनुकूल ।
तव प्रभावँ बड़वानलहि जारि सकइ खलु तूल ॥ ३३ ॥

dōhā.

tā kahum̐ prabhu kachu agama nahim̐ jā para tumha anukūla.
tava prabhāvam̐ baravānalahi jāri saka'i khalu tūla. 33.

Oh Lord, nothing is impossible or unattainable for him on whom you are gracious and favourable.

To wit, by your grace and blessing even a humble thing as piece of cotton can be sufficiently empowered to overcome the might of the great subterranean fire known as ‘Barwanal’ so much so that the cotton would burn the latter instead of the other way round¹! (Doha no. 33)

[Note—¹The ‘baravānala’ is the great underground fire that keeps the depths of the ocean warm, and often times it reveal itself in underground volcanoes that spew huge columns of hot steam from the surface of the ocean, or keep the water of hot-water springs boiling perpetually. This fire is so strong that the ‘water’ of the spring or the ocean is unable to douse it. But if the almighty Supreme Being so wishes, then the impossible can happen—which is that a humble shred of cotton can remain unscathed if it is thrown into this ferocious fire, or may be this cotton can even cover the fire to extinguish it, or it can also happen that instead of the fire burning the cotton, the cotton would burn the fire!

Hence, Hanuman says that even if it is assumed that it was he who had penetrated the otherwise impenetrable fort of Lanka, then destroyed the Ashok garden

and killed so many fierce demon warriors, and then burnt the city of Lanka—there is nothing remarkable in all these deeds that are attributed to him, as he was able to do them by the grace and blessing of Lord Ram.

So we observe that Hanuman is essentially an embodiment of the grand virtues of devotion, modesty and humility; he attributes all his successes and spectacular feats to the grace of the Lord. Hanuman by his example teaches us how we should ourselves relate to our chosen deity; how we should be humble and modest during all our achievements in life, how we should credit everything in life to the grace of the Lord God, how we ought to surrender ourselves completely to our Lord God and have faith in him with respect to our welfare and well-being, for then it becomes the Lord's own responsibility to take care of us.

This attitude helps us to overcome ego, haughtiness and arrogance; it removes a huge burden of worries that we carry on our shoulders because once we have surrendered ourselves to the Lord God, it is henceforth 'he' who now has to worry for us; and it pre-empts jealousy and malice that may arise in the heart of our adversaries who may not like our successes, because now we openly declare that we do not merit any praise nor do we claim any honour or reward for any of our achievements—for it is the Lord who is actually the one who has made it happen the way it happened, and therefore it is 'he' who ought to be honoured and praised!]

चौ०. नाथ भगति अति सुखदायनी । देहु कृपा करि अनपायनी ॥ १ ॥

सुनि प्रभु परम सरल कपि बानी । एवमस्तु तब कहेउ भवानी ॥ २ ॥

उमा राम सुभाउ जेहिं जाना । ताहि भजनु तजि भाव न आना ॥ ३ ॥

यह संबाद जासु उर आवा । रघुपति चरन भगति सोइ पावा ॥ ४ ॥

सुनि प्रभु बचन कहहिं कपिबृन्दा । जय जय जय कृपाल सुखकंदा ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

nātha bhagati ati sukhadāyanī. dēhu kṛpā kari anapāyanī. 1.

sunī prabhu parama sarala kapi bānī. ēvamastu taba kahē'u bhavānī. 2.

umā rāma subhā'u jēhim jānā. tāhi bhajanu taji bhāva na ānā. 3.

yaha sambāda jāsū urā āvā. raghupati carana bhagati sō'i pāvā. 4.

sunī prabhu bacana kahahim kapibṛndā. jaya jaya jaya kṛpāla sukhakandā. 5.

[Hanuman concluded his submission by saying—] 'Oh Lord! Please be kind and gracious to grant me your eternal devotion, a devotion that does not diminish with time or is affected by circumstances, as it is the one singular blessing that bestows immense joy, happiness and bliss to a creature.'

[Lord Shiva said to Bhavani, his consort to whom he was narrating the wonderful story—] 'Oh Bhavani! When the Lord (Sri Ram) heard the words of prayerful supplication spoken by Hanuman, humble words that were sincere and heart-felt, he obliged Hanuman by saying "So shall it be (ēvamastu)". (2)

Oh Uma (another name of Lord Shiva's consort)! He who knows the inherent nature of Lord Ram and has no doubt about it, he who is well acquainted with the Lord's temperament and habit (of being exceptionally merciful, kind, gracious, loving,

benevolent, munificent, forgiving and tolerant towards his devotees and those who have unconditionally surrendered themselves before the Lord, pleading to the Lord for his help, solace and succour)—such a person will not feel inclined to have any other emotion or sentiment except to worship the Lord, to adore him, and to have devotion for him in its purest and undiluted form. (3)

Verily, in all sooth and without gainsay, anyone who remembers this conversation (between Lord Ram and Hanuman) shall surely be inspired to have similar a devotion for Lord Ram and a desire to worship the Lord's holy feet.¹ (4)

When the assembled Kapis (i.e. all the monkeys and bears who had accompanied Hanuman to Lord Ram when he had come to report about his adventures in Lanka and the success in finding Sita) heard the conversation, and especially the words of the Lord (whereby he blessed Hanuman and expressed his indebtedness to him), all of them lauded the Lord and cheered him repeatedly, exclaiming in unison, 'Glory to Lord Ram; Glory to Lord Ram who is most kind and gracious; Glory to Lord Ram who is a fountainhead of happiness, joy, bliss and beatitude (jaya jaya jaya krpāla sukhakandā).²

[Note—¹When one recalls the emotional moments of Hanuman's meeting with Lord Ram and how they bonded with each other, and at the same time the person remembers the stellar virtues of Lord Ram as the Lord who loves his devotees most dearly, the Lord who is peerless as far as showing mercy, grace, kindness, benevolence and munificence are concerned, the Lord who goes out of his way to accommodate one and all, and to forgive everyone who begs for forgiveness—then surely one will feel inclined to declare one's total allegiance and full devotion to such a Lord as Lord Ram is. Forsooth, where else would one find such a dear Lord as Lord Ram; in who else would one find a dear and selfless a friend as one would find in Lord Ram?

²The exceptionally warm and cordial manner in which Lord Ram received Hanuman and showered praises upon him send a wave of joy and excitement through the rank and file of the assembled crowd. All the monkeys and bears were exhilarated; all of them felt that they were blessed to have found such a munificent, benevolent, kind, graceful, affectionate Lord who endeared everyone who came into contact with him. This nature, habit and attitude of the Lord touched their hearts so much so that they spontaneously vowed to repose their complete loyalty and full allegiance to him. Loud cheers and enthusiastic applause rendered the air in every direction; all the Kapis celebrated this occasion with cries of jubilation and expression of solidarity with their beloved Lord.]

तब रघुपति कपिपतिहि बोलावा । कहा चलैं कर करहु बनावा ॥ ६ ॥
 अब बिलंबु केहि कारन कीजे । तुरत कपिन्ह कहूँ आयसु दीजे ॥ ७ ॥
 कौतुक देखि सुमन बहु बरषी । नभ तें भवन चले सुर हरषी ॥ ८ ॥

taba raghupati kapipatihi bōlāvā. kahā calaiṁ kara karahu banāvā. 6.
 aba bilambu kē hi kārana kijē. turata kapinha kahum'āyasu dījē. 7.

kautuka dēkhi sumana bahu baraṣī. nabha tēm bhavana calē sura haraṣī. 8.

Then Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram)¹ summoned the king of the Kapis (i.e. Sugriv)², and instructed him, ‘Make immediate arrangements for the departure of the army for Lanka. (6)

There is no reason why should there be any delay now. Call all the Kapis (the monkeys as well as their bear companions) and give them suitable instructions in this regard.’ (7)

The gods, who had assembled in the sky to watch the proceedings on the ground, greatly marveled and were amazed at the strange way the Lord acts and carries out his worldly sports; they were positively glad at the developments and the miraculous way the events had turned in their favour³. Then they showered flowers from the sky and cheerfully went to their respective abodes in the heaven⁴. (8)

[Note—¹During the course of reading of the Ramayana, many names of Lord Ram have been used, and one of them is “Raghupati”, literally meaning a Lord of the line of kings descending from the great and illustrious king Raghu of the ancient kingdom of Ayodhya.

²Tulsidas, a learned and skilled poet as he was, uses the term ‘Pati’, meaning a lord and a king, for both Lord Ram and Sugriv to signify that at this moment two great kings of two equally great kingdoms of Ayodhya and Kishkindha are joining hands to carry out a great campaign jointly. But here Lord Ram has no army of his own, whereas Sugriv commands a singularly formidable army. So by addressing them as ‘Raghupati’ and ‘Kapi-pati’ respectively the poet emphasizes that though Lord Ram has no physical army at present to support him in his campaign, but this does not undermine the fact that he belongs to a great empire of Ayodhya ruled by illustrious kings descending from the world famous king Raghu, and so both Lord Ram and Sugriv are on the same footing as far as this campaign—of freeing Sita—is concerned.

³The gods, who were well aware of the reality of Lord Ram, that he was a personified form of Lord Vishnu, were amazed that the supreme Lord of the world would need the help of humble forest-dwelling Kapis to win Lanka, instead of some great army of the city-dwelling human race!

They marveled as to how a single individual (Lord Ram), who has been sent to the forest along with his wife (Sita) and younger brother (Laxman), who had no other support except the strength of his own arms and who had only a little while ago seemed lost and dejected, would, out of the force of his will and enterprise, and of course a little help from a benevolent destiny and providence, would so astonishingly overcome all hurdles and obstacles, that would seem insurmountable for others, to accomplish success in an endeavour that had even baffled the gods themselves—which was to launch a campaign to eliminate the powerful and invincible demon king Ravana and his equally powerful and ruthless army of ferocious demons. This enterprise was a very singular one—as it pitched demons renowned for their ferocity, extraordinary power and formidable strength, demons who had trounced even the gods and terrorized them at will, against humble beings such as the Kapis as well as

the two brothers Lord Ram and Laxman—and thus to imagine that the tables would finally turn against the demons was simply out of the question.

The gods also were immensely surprised at the way destiny and providence play their own games, in the way the most unlikely can often times become a reality, and the most unthinkable of situations can transmew themselves into a practical plan of action—for it was indeed remarkable that humans represented by Lord Ram and Laxman would team up with wild forest-dwelling creatures represented by the monkeys and bears to launch a well-planned and skillfully maneuvered military campaign to conquer a formidable army represented by the demons and overrun its citadel at Lanka. To wit, given the will and the determination, all odds can be surmounted, and anything can be made possible in this world.

It was remarkable that Lord Ram would take the help of humble ‘Kapis’, who were forest dwelling creatures, instead of his own army of Ayodhya which was renowned in the whole world for its valour, courage, skill and strength, to launch a campaign to free Sita, which was in fact an excuse to fulfill the promise the Lord had made to the gods and mother earth on an earlier occasion—that he would slay the cruel demons led by their king Ravana who had become invincible by the many boons that he had acquired, and thereby free the earth as well as the gods from their torments and horrors (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188).

⁴The gods celebrated the occasion by raining flowers from the sky. Lord Ram was now ready to finally go on a mission to eliminate the demons, and this was what the gods had always wanted. Since all the circumstances were now favourable and the Lord had issued instructions to Sugriv to start the preparations for the great campaign, the gods wished to show their happiness by showering flowers.]

दो०. कपिपति बेगि बोलाए आए जूथप जूथ ।

नाना बरन अतुल बल बानर भालु बरूथ ॥ ३४ ॥

dōhā.

kapipati bēgi bōlā'ē ā'ē jūthapa jūtha.

nānā barana atula bala bānara bhālu barūtha. 34.

The lord of the Kapis (i.e. Sugriv) immediately summoned all the commanders of the countless groups of monkey warriors in his realm.

These multitudes of warriors consisted of monkeys and bears (bānara - bhālu)¹ of myriad forms, belonging to different clans which had their own distinguishing characteristics such as colours of their skins and individual habits, but one thing was common to them all, and that was they were all gallant, and were matchless in strength, bravery, valour and courage. (Doha no. 34)

[Note—¹One thing is very clear from this Doha—that the army of Lord Ram consisted of both the ‘monkeys’ as well as the ‘bears’. Though the word ‘Kapi’ literally means a monkey, and this word is liberally used to refer to the Lord’s army as well as to the inhabitants of the kingdom of Kishkindha, but it is only because the population of the monkeys in this forested kingdom was in the majority, while the

community of bears was in a minority, and that was all. The phrase ‘army of Kapis’ therefore does not mean that all its warriors were ‘monkeys’ alone, for there were a large numbers of ‘bears’ too who had participated in the Lord’s campaign of Lanka.

This fact will be clear when we come to the narration of the war where we shall read that both the monkeys and bears were equal partners in the battles, and fought shoulder-to-shoulder alongside each other. In this context it is also to be noted that one of Sugriv’s chief advisors and confidante was a bear named Jamvant. It was Jamvant who had inspired Hanuman to go across the ocean to search Sita in Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 30.

Refer also to Chaupai line nos. 1-3, 8 and 10 herein below.]

चौ०. प्रभु पद पंकज नावहिं सीसा । गर्जहिं भालु महाबल कीसा ॥ १ ॥
देखी राम सकल कपि सेना । चितइ कृपा करि राजिव नैना ॥ २ ॥
राम कृपा बल पाइ कपिंदा । भए पच्छजुत मनहुं गिरिंदा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

prabhu pada paṅkaja nāvahiṁ sīsā. garjahiṁ bhālu mahābala kīsā. 1.
dēkhī rāma sakala kapi sēnā. cita'i kṛpā kari rājiva nainā. 2.
rāma kṛpā bala pā'i kapindā. bha'e pacchajuta manahum' girindā. 3.

All the assembled monkey and bear warriors came and bowed their heads before the lotus-like feet of Lord Ram. They were all extremely valiant, powerful and strong, and they roared and thundered vigorously (waiting for instructions, and eager for departure on the campaign trail). (1)

Lord Ram surveyed the whole army of Kapis (monkeys and bears) as they paraded before him, and he cast his compassionate glances graciously over the whole assembly of troops. (2)

When the Kapis observed that the Lord is casting his graceful and benevolent glances upon all of them, they were all highly encouraged and motivated, and their enthusiasm was so great that they felt as if they had wings that would enable them to fly like birds just like the mythological mountains that grew wings and could fly at will (bha'e pacchajuta manahum' girindā)¹. (3)

[Note—¹The troops were highly excited and thrilled at the prospect of an adventure that was to their liking. They were roaring and raring to go, and felt so enthusiastic that made them feel they would virtually fly like huge mountains and fall en-masse upon the enemy to crush it to smithereens.

Of course, when Lord Ram observed this committed and motivated army he too felt encouraged and sure of success as the army’s high morale was crucial for attaining success in such a hazardous endeavour as the war against the ferocious demons known for their strength and daring.]

हरषि राम तब कीन्ह पयाना । सगुन भए सुंदर सुभ नाना ॥ ४ ॥

जासु सकल मंगलमय कीती । तासु पयान सगुन यह नीती ॥ ५ ॥

haraṣi rāma taba kīnha payānā. saguna bha'e sundara subha nānā. 4.
jāsu sakala maṅgalamaya kīṭī. tāsu payāna saguna yaha nīṭī. 5.

Then Lord Ram cheerfully made his departure to launch the campaign; at that time all sorts of auspicious omens occurred to indicate that things would turn out favourably. (4)

Forsooth and without gainsay indeed, he (Lord Ram) whose marvelous glory is unquestionably auspicious and beautiful, when he decides to start on a journey (to undertake an enterprise that would fulfill his mission on earth¹) then there is no question of anything other than auspicious and favourable happening! (5)

[Note—¹The mission of Lord Ram was to eliminate the terror of demons, and he had made this promise to the gods and mother earth on a previous occasion. Further, a chaste woman (Sita) had been wrongfully abducted and imprisoned by an evil creature (the demon king Ravana), and this crime had to be punished. Therefore, this mission itself was for the general good of all living beings on earth as it involved the elimination of the cruel demons, as well as for restoring the honour of a faultless woman, Sita, who was kidnapped forcibly by Ravana, so it was undoubtedly for a noble cause, and anything done for the good of others and in pursuit of a noble cause is deemed to be auspicious, holy and beautiful. This was one primary reason why there was all round enthusiasm and cheerfulness in Lord Ram's camp.

It was not going to be a war for the sake of a war such as for the purpose of usurping some great king's prosperous kingdom out of jealousy and avarice by another king of a capricious and expansionist nature, but it was to be a holy war for a righteous cause and with a noble aim. It was to be a war of good against the evil; a war that was thrust upon Lord Ram and not one in which he willingly got involved just for the pleasure of fighting. It was not like a sport of hunting that kings found as a past time that resulted in senseless killing of innocent animals, but it was a necessary war that was required to eliminate 'cruel, blood-thirsty animals' symbolised by the demons who had terrorized innocent creatures in this world, plundering and killing at their free will, so that peace, happiness, freedom, fearlessness and rule of law can once again be restored on earth.]

प्रभु पयान जाना बैदेहीं । फरकि बाम अँग जनु कहि देहीं ॥ ६ ॥

जोड़ जोड़ सगुन जानकिहि होई । असगुन भयउ रावनहि सोई ॥ ७ ॥

prabhu payāna jānā baidēhīm. pharaki bāma aṁga janu kahi dēhīm. 6.
jō'i jō'i saguna jānakihi hōī. asaguna bhaya'u rāvanahi sōī. 7.

Vaidehi (Sita) got the hint that Lord Ram has made his departure (to start the campaign to free her) because the left side of her body began to flutter¹—as if to tell her that good tidings were soon to come. (6)

Whatever positive omens occurred to Sita, the opposite of those occurred to Ravana (hinting to him that some severe calamity is in the offing)². (7)

[Note—¹It is believed that when the left side of a woman's body flutters it is a good sign for her. So when Sita's muscles on her left began fluttering, she got a hint that something good was about to happen. And the only good that could happen to her was freedom from captivity in Lanka, and if that was to actually happen it meant that Lord Ram is on his way. This is also what Hanuman had promised her when he took leave for going back to Lord Ram.

²What is good for a female as far as signs and omens are concerned, it is bad for a male. So if fluttering of the left side of the body was good for Sita, the same kind of fluttering of muscles was a bad sign for Ravana.

Hence, the omens indicated that what cheered Sita would dismay Ravana. So, if the omens meant Sita would find joy by way of meeting Lord Ram and finding herself delivered, the same omens meant that Ravana would be devastated.]

चला कटकु को बरनै पारा । गर्जहि बनर भालु अपारा ॥ ८ ॥
नख आयुध गिरि पादपधारी । चले गगन महि इच्छाचारी ॥ ९ ॥
केहरिनाद भालु कपि करहीं । डगमगाहि दिग्गज चिक्करहीं ॥ १० ॥

calā kaṭaku kō baranaim̐ pārā. garjahim̐ bānara bhālu apārā. 8.
nakha āyudha giri pādapadhārī. calē gagana mahi icchācārī. 9.
kēharināda bhālu kapi karahīm̐. ḍagamagāhim̐ diggaja cikkarahīm̐. 10.

The army made its departure and marched towards its destination. Say, who can ever describe it (both the army and the way it marched)? Uncountable numbers of the monkeys and bears were roaring and thundering violently, and there was no measurement of the army's strength and extent. (8)

The warriors had large piercing nails (which they would use as knives, daggers and swords), and all were armed with huge rocks and boulders as well as trees. They moved in the way that suited them—some walked on foot and others took the path of the sky¹. (9)

The monkeys and bears were roaring like lions, and this caused the legendary Diggajas (“diggaja”; the elephants said to support the earth from below in its eight cardinal points or directions²) to shake and trumpet loudly in great alarm.

[To wit, as the army of Lord Ram moved ahead, there was a great tumult on the surface of the earth; the energetic activity of the marching army, the uproarious shouts of the warriors and the angry stamping of their feet made the earth shake and tremble as if an earthquake was taking place.] (10)

[Note—¹So there was no wonder if Hanuman could fly across the ocean to go and come back from Lanka.

²The ‘Diggajas’ support the earth at four corners—north, east, south and west, as well as the four angles of north-east, south-east, south-west and north-west. When the army of Lord Ram moved, the earth shook, giving the impression that these eight strong elephants had begun to tremble and squirm.]

छं०. चिक्करहिं दिग्गज डोल महि गिरि लोल सागर खरभरे । १ ।
 मन हरष सभ गंधर्ब सुर मुनि नाग किंनर दुख टरे ॥ २ ॥
 कटकटहिं मर्कट बिकट भट बहु कोटि कोटिन्ह धावहीं । ३ ।
 जय राम प्रबल प्रताप कोसलनाथ गुन गन गावहीं ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

cikkarahim diggaja ḍōla mahi giri lōla sāgara kharabharē. 1.
 mana haraṣa sabha gandharba sura muni nāga kinnara dukha ṭarē. 2.
 kaṭakaṭahim markaṭa bikaṭa bhaṭa bahu kōṭi kōṭinha dhāvahim. 3.
 jaya rāma prabala pratāpa kōsalanātha guna gana gāvahim. 4.

The Diggajas (the eight elephants supporting the earth at the eight cardinal points) trumpeted wildly; the earth shook violently; the mountains rumbled and rocked; the water of the ocean began churning and heaving massively (producing huge waves). (Chanda line no. 1)

The Sun-God, the Moon-God and all other Gods, the sages, the ascetics and other pious souls, the Naagas (serpents and all other reptiles), and the Kinnars (the dancers in heaven; a sort of demi-god)—all of them felt exhilarated and elated in their minds and hearts (“Mana”) because this event marked the beginning of the end of their sufferings and miseries (caused to them by the ferocious demons)¹. (Chanda line no. 2)

Fierce and redoubtable monkey warriors gnashed and ground their teeth in anger even as they rushed forward in countless multitudes, in a bellicose mood. (Chanda line no. 3)

They were hailing the glory of Lord Ram in a thunderous voice, calling out in a shrill cry, ‘Glory to Lord Ram who is extremely powerful, strong and valiant, and who is the king of Kaushal (the kingdom of Ayodhya)!’ (Chanda line no. 4)

[Note—¹All the gods and the holy men were suffering intensely under the reign of horror and terror unleashed by the demons under their merciless king Ravana. When Lord Ram marched with his formidable army on his mission to take on these cruel demons head on and eliminate them, it was definitely something to celebrate for those who suffered immensely under the demons. How ruthless and cruel the demons were, and the sort of horrors they had spread everywhere has been narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 179—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 184. We have already read about it in Chapter no. 3 of our Book.

Fed up by a life full of sorrows, the gods and mother earth, the latter representing all the creatures that dwelt on earth, had made a fervent appeal to the

Supreme Being to intervene on their behalf and restore law and order in this world. The Lord had then promised them that he would personally come down in the form of Lord Ram and eliminate the scourge of the demons. We have also read about it in Chapter no. 4 of our Book which narrates this episode as it is described in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 184—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 188.

That moment has arrived, so definitely it was the time to rejoice. The physical tumult caused by the marching of Lord Ram's army as narrated in these verses may have momentarily terrified all living beings as they may have thought that the doomsday has finally arrived, but the gods and the learned sages and ascetics who were privy to the actual cause of this tumult were very happy.]

सहि सक न भार उदार अहिपति बार बारहिं मोहई । ५ ।
 गह दसन पुनि पुनि कमठ पृष्ठ कठोर सो किमि सोहई ॥ ६ ॥
 रघुबीर रुचिर प्रयान प्रस्थिति जानि परम सुहावनी । ७ ।
 जनु कमठ खरपर सर्पराज सो लिखत अबिचल पावनी ॥ ८ ॥

sahi saka na bhāra udāra ahipati bāra bārahim mōhaī. 5.
 gaha dasana puni puni kamaṭha pṛṣṭa kaṭhōra sō kimi sōhaī. 6.
 raghubīra rucira prayāna prasthiti jāni parama suhāvanī. 7.
 janu kamaṭha kharpara sarparāja sō likhata abicala pāvanī. 8.

Lord Seshnath (the legendary serpent-king with a thousand-hoods; the celestial serpent who is said to hold the world aloft on his hoods) could not cope with the excessive heavy weight exerted by the marching army on his head (because the weight of hundreds and thousands of monkey and bear warriors was now concentrated on a limited area of the surface of the earth, thereby exerting excess pressure at some selected points on his hood), and so he began to reel and feel dizzy and uneasy due to the excessive burden put on his head by the belligerent army, inspite of his being very magnanimous and forgiving because he had never complained about the weight of the earth that he carried on his hoods since eternity.

[To wit, perhaps it was the first time in creation when Seshnath felt that he is unable to bear this heavy weight of the army of Lord Ram, so massive and extensive it was.] (Chaupai line no. 5)

Feeling that he would collapse and sink if he did not find a support, Seshnath sought help from the legendary Tortoise (who also supports the earth on the back of his hard shell) by grasping the sharp protuberances on the rough outer surface of the latter's shell by the means of his sharp teeth.

[To wit, when Seshnath felt a sort of vertigo overtaking him, he hooked his teeth around the sharp spike-like extensions on the back of the Tortoise's shell in order to tether himself to them and avoid a disaster.] (Chaupai line no. 6)

It appears that this wonderful development of Lord Ram, the brave warrior of king Raghu's line, making his departure to accomplish the great mission for which he had come down to earth was so momentous, singular and glorious one that Lord Seshnath wished to immortalize it by writing it down for posterity. So he decided to carve this

marvelous story by etching it on the hard shell of the Tortoise by scratching with his teeth, and it is for this purpose that he had clung himself on the back of the shell of the Tortoise so that he can write down Lord Ram's feat and leave it for posterity by scratching the shell by his sharp teeth as he moved backward and forward on it, apparently to maintain his balance.

[Seshnath had sharp teeth, and the shell of the Tortoise was hard as rock. So therefore, just as ancient people left edicts and carvings on rocks to make them permanent, Seshnath decided to immortalize this glorious story of Lord Ram by carving it on the back of the shell of the Tortoise by scratching on it with his teeth even as he had to toss and turn by the shifting of weight by the movement of the Lord's army.] (Chaupai line nos. 7-8)

दो०. एहि बिधि जाइ कृपानिधि उतरे सागर तीर ।

जहँ तहँ लागे खान फल भालु बिपुल कपि बीर ॥ ३५ ॥

dōhā.

ēhi bidhi jā'i kṛpānidhi utarē sāgara tīra.

jaham̐ taham̐ lāgē khāna phala bhālu bipula kapi bīra. 35.

In this fascinating manner Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness and grace (kṛpānidhi), reached the shore of the ocean and pitched his camp.

Once there, the multitudes of brave monkeys and bears began refreshing themselves by eating fruits¹. (Doha no. 35)

[Note—¹After leaving Kishkindha, the army had not halted even for a brief break; it marched relentlessly ahead, without any stop—apropos: (i) Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 1, verse no. 40; and (ii) Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 71-72.

Naturally the soldiers were hungry. So now, when their progress was halted by the ocean, they found some time to refresh themselves, while their commanders and Lord Ram would hold a conference to decide how to overcome this barrier symbolized by the endless stretch of water of the ocean—apropos: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 4, verse nos. 102-105.

When the ocean was finally crossed by the means of a bridge built across it, and the army landed on the shores of Lanka, once again some time was needed to plan the future strategy. So once again Lord Ram ordered the monkeys and bears to go and eat fruit to refresh themselves—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-6 that precede Doha no. 5.]

चौ०. उहाँ निसाचर रहहिं ससंका । जब तें जारि गयउ कपि लंका ॥ १ ॥

निज निज गृहँ सब करहिं बिचारा । नहिं निसिचर कुल केर उबारा ॥ २ ॥

जासु दूत बल बरनि न जाई । तेहि आएँ पुर कवन भलाई ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

uhām̐ nisācara rahahim̐ sasaṅkā. jaba tēm̐ jāri gaya'u kapi laṅkā. 1.

nija nija gr̥ham̐ saba karahim̐ bicārā. nahim̐ niscara kula kēra ubārā. 2.

jāsu dūta bala barani na jā'ī. tēhi ā'ēm' pura kavana bhalā'ī. 3.

[Now, let us leave Lord Ram and his army on the shore of the ocean, and divert our attention to learn about the developments in Lanka where a lot of turmoil ensued in the wake of Hanuman burning the city, thrashing and killing its army mercilessly, and then fearlessly left the city, without any opposition or resistance, to go back to Kishkindha to report to Lord Ram. This clearly implied that the demons were sore affright and terrified of him, as not a single demon warrior dared to challenge him as he was leaving the city on his way home.]

Ever since the Kapi (Hanuman) burnt Lanka and went away, there was a heavy atmosphere of gloom and dismay in the city. The demons (who were not accustomed to such a severe beating and shame inflicted upon them by a lonely intruder in the form of a humble monkey) were extremely terrorized and bewildered; they lived in a perpetual environment of great fear, uncertainty and consternation. (1)

They gathered together in small groups in their homes, and discussed the developments. The unanimous view was that the demon race was now doomed, and that there seemed no chances of escape from the calamity that stares blankly in their faces. (2)

The general thread of conversation amongst the distraught and terrified demon citizens was this: "He¹ whose mere messenger is so powerful, strong and devastating (and who has caused such havoc single handedly, with no one daring to stop him), say what will happen when he himself arrives here with the full force of his army, and unleashes the fury of his anger!" (3)

[Note—¹The demons were well aware that Hanuman was simply a messenger of Lord Ram whose wife Sita was kidnapped and brought to the city of Lanka by their king Ravana. So they mean Lord Ram here. The citizens' homes were burnt, and countless demon warriors were either killed or severely wounded in confrontation with Hanuman. All these developments left the inhabitants of Lanka dazed and befuddled.]

दूतिन्ह सन सुनि पुरजन बानी । मंदोदरी अधिक अकुलानी ॥ ४ ॥
 रहसि जोरि कर पति पग लागी । बोली बचन नीति रस पागी ॥ ५ ॥
 कंत करष हरि सन परिहरहू । मोर कहा अति हित हियँ धरहू ॥ ६ ॥

dūtinha sana suni purajana bānī. mandōdarī adhika akulānī. 4.
 rahasi jōri kara pati paga lāgī. bōlī bacana nīti rasa pāgī. 5.
 kanta karaṣa hari sana pariharahū. mōra kahā ati hita hiyaṁ' dharahū. 6.

When Mandodari, the wife of Ravana, heard of what the citizens were saying through the medium of spies and informers, she was extremely agitated and worried¹. (4)

When she found her husband alone in the palace, she fell down at his feet, and clasping them in supplication, she pleaded with him using sweet words which were wise and full of prudence. (5)

Mandodari said, 'My dear husband (kanta)! Please abandon animosity with Lord Hari (the Supreme Being; Lord Vishnu who was in the form of Lord Ram). Understand that what I say is for your own profound good, and with this view pay heed to my salutary words of wisdom and keep them in your heart.

[To wit, don't take me in the wrong sense, don't think that I am disloyal to you by pointing out your faults and misdemeanours. Listen to my advice as it is for your own good, and pay attention to me. Understand that your welfare is intrinsically linked to my own welfare as I am your wife; and so I can never say anything that will be harmful for you.] (6)

[Note—¹Mandodari came to learn about the gloomy developments and the demoralizing impact they had on the morale of the city when her confidantes informed her about them. She knew the evil, sinful, stubborn and haughty nature of her husband Ravana more than anyone else, and so she feared for the worst. But nevertheless she decided to try and make her husband see the light of reason, and hoped that good sense would somehow prevail upon him.

The question arises that if Mandodari could learn from spies about the things the citizens were saying, why no such information was received by Ravana? The reason lies in Ravana's nature—he was so wrathful and short-tempered, so haughty, arrogant and egoist that he was unwilling to hear anything that did not suit him or that he did not want to hear, that anyone who dared to inform him about the rumblings in the city would not only bear the brunt of his anger, and immediately put to death himself, but would certainly also cause those whom he report to be subjected to a merciless death. So, Ravana's nature went against him as he was kept in the dark about the fact that the city was mentally revolting against him, that the demon army was demoralized, and that tremors of mutiny were rumbling right under his very nose.

During the course of our reading we shall discover this feature in Ravana's character—that he was egoist, stubborn and arrogant to the extreme, and that he would pay no attention to any advice by anyone about anything, no matter how good that advice was, once he had decided on a course of action.

Though it can be argued that it is a good sign for a king to be determined and resolute in his decisions and actions, but at the same time it is expected of a good king that he keeps his mind open to wise council and good advice of his close confidantes such as his own ministers and advisors, and is able to take into account the changes in situations to modify his responses to them. Stubbornness and haughtiness of mind that does not want to accommodate views of others, and thinks that what it thinks is correct and what others think is wrong, without even bothering to weigh the pros and the cons of the various options, would surely ruin the king and would be detrimental for the welfare of his kingdom.]

समुझत जासु दूत कइ करनी । स्रवहिं गर्भ रजनीचर घरनी ॥ ७ ॥

तासु नारि निज सचिव बोलाई । पठवहु कंत जो चहहु भलाई ॥ ८ ॥

samujhata jāsu dūta ka'i karanī. sravahim garbha rajanīcara gharanī. 7.
tāsu nāri nija saciva bōlāī. paṭhavahu kanta jō cahahu bhalāī. 8.

As soon as the wives of the demons hear and recall the fearsome deeds of the messenger, they become so horrified with terror that they miscarry. (7)

Oh my lord (kanta)! If you want your own good (and welfare of the kingdom) then summon your minister and send back the wife of that Lord whose messenger had instilled such great fear in the demons. (8)

तव कुल कमल बिपिन दुखदाई । सीता सीत निसा सम आई ॥ ९ ॥
सुनहु नाथ सीता बिनु दीन्हें । हित न तुम्हार संभु अज कीन्हें ॥ १० ॥

tava kula kamala bipina dukhadā'ī. sītā sīta nisā sama ā'ī. 9.
sunahu nātha sītā binu dīnhēm. hita na tumhāra sambhu aja kīnhēm. 10.

Sita has become a symbol of doom for the entire race of demons who were hitherto living peacefully in the city of Lanka. She is like that frosty night that spells doom for a bed of lotuses that otherwise bloom in a pond.

[To wit, even as a frosty night destroys a bed of lotuses that otherwise bloom in a pond during ordinary nights, Sita too has become ruinous for the demon race which lived happily in Lanka till now. Just as the lotuses bloom in a pond but wither during frost, the demons have become distressed and gloomy ever since Sita came here.]¹ (9)

Listen my lord; without giving Sita back you can never expect any good for yourself. Even Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma themselves won't be able to help you at all.

[To wit, if you think that you have nothing to fear because you worship Lord Shiva and Lord Brahma, and that they would protect you, then listen, even they won't come to your aid if you do not return Sita to her rightful Lord (Ram). Lords Shiva and Brahma cannot side with you and neglect your evil deeds, for these gods cannot condone sins, impropriety and unrighteousness. You are deceiving yourself if you harbour such false beliefs; they are misconceptions that would drive you to your own grave.] (10)

[Note—¹In this metaphor, Sita is like the symbolic frosty night that causes the lotus flowers to shrink; the demon race is like the lotus flower, and Lanka is like the pond in which the lotus flowers bloomed prior to being struck by frost. The city was prosperous and the demons lived happily, but since Sita came here everything turned gloomy and uncertain.]

दो०. राम बान अहि गन सरिस निकर निसाचर भेक ।
जब लगि ग्रसत न तब लगि जतनु करहु तजि टेक ॥ ३६ ॥
dōhā.

rāma bāna ahi gana sarisa nikara nisācara bhēka.
jaba lagi grasata na taba lagi jatanu karahu taji tēka. 36.

The arrows of Lord Ram are like fierce serpents, and the demon hordes are like mere frogs in their comparison.

So therefore, till the time those serpents (arrows) do not devour (kill) the frogs (demons), you still have time in your hands to put things in order. Abandon stubbornness and haughtiness, and find a way to save the demons from doom while still there is time with you.' (Doha no. 36)

चौ०. श्रवन सुनी सठ ता करि बानी । बिहसा जगत बिदित अभिमानी ॥ १ ॥

सभय सुभाउ नारि कर साचा । मंगल महुँ भय मन अति काचा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

śravana sunī saṭha tā kari bānī. bihasā jagata bidita abhimānī. 1.
sabhaya subhā'u nāri kara sēcā. maṅgala mahum'bhaya mana ati kēcā. 2.

When that stupid fellow (Ravana) who was renowned in the world as being exceedingly haughty, arrogant and egoist, heard her (Mandodari's) words that he took as admonishment, he roared with laughter defiantly. (1)

He haughtily retorted, 'Truly it is said that a woman's is timid by nature and she is easily overcome by fear. Even in the event when auspicious things are about to happen¹ she harbours doubt, fear and consternation, looking at the darker side of every situation, because she has a weak, fickle and irresolute mind. (2)

[Note—¹This observation of Ravana that "auspicious things are about to happen" is to be marked. No one knew the secret that was in his mind and heart. He had abducted Sita with a clear understanding that it is through her that he can hope to find redemption for his soul, because he felt that his life had been so sinful and his deeds so bad that there is no scope for his soul to find deliverance and emancipation ever. This resolution is clear in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-5 that precede Doha no. 23.

It was not possible for him to do any righteous, auspicious, holy and virtuous thing now at this late stage in life that could at least neutralize the huge burden of sins and evil deeds that he had accumulated on his head. His soul was crying for redemption and yearning for salvation; he wanted internal peace and bliss for himself, but it eluded him. He knew that he cannot successfully practice any of the means prescribed in the scriptures by which a creature can atone for his past sins and misdeeds; he knew that he can't find deliverance, emancipation and salvation by doing Tapa (penance and austerity), Yoga (meditation), Dhyan (contemplation), Bhakti (devotion for Lord God), Daan (charity), Yagya (religious sacrifices), Daya (showing mercy and compassion), Tirtha (going on a pilgrimage), Prayaschita (penitence and repentance for sins and evil life), Sewa (serving the lowly and humble), or any other means prescribed by the scriptures.

His only chance, he determined for himself, was to get rid of his evil body of a demon by getting killed in a battle at the hands of the Supreme Being, who he firmly believed had come down to earth in the form of Lord Ram. Fighting and waging a cruel war was something that suited his nature and temperament, as he was not inclined to be pious and compassionate.

But to achieve this noble aim—to die at the hands of the Supreme Being personified as Lord Ram—he would have to do something very unconventional and extremely nasty so as to sufficiently provoke the Lord, who is otherwise so merciful and forgiving that he would most probably spare Ravana if there was any scope of forgiving him, that he would be compelled to come to him and kill him in a face-to-face battle. This occurrence would serve a dual purpose—one, it will free Ravana's soul from the cage of the evil body of a demon in which it was trapped, and help it attain deliverance, salvation, emancipation, and two, it will afford Ravana a rare chance to have a 'Darshan', a holy sight of the Supreme Lord, without having to make great spiritual efforts and undertake rigorous religious performances in order to achieve this rarest of rare privilege that all living beings yearn for but rarely get; it would be a singular achievement that would grant him eternal bliss, beatitude and joy.

He had another noble aim in his mind and heart. Suppose he decided to abandon his sinful life and devote himself entirely to a righteous and holy way of life, and do whatever was necessary to atone for and seek forgiveness for his past sins, and also suppose he would succeed in his efforts at penitence and attained his desired spiritual goal of liberation and deliverance, of emancipation and salvation, of obtaining eternal bliss, beatitude and felicity—but it would be restricted to him alone; he alone would be the beneficiary of all such spiritual practices. But it would be too selfish for him to reap this largesse while the rest of his demon companions, his kith and kin, his soldiers and commanders et al, who had faithfully and loyally been serving him for such a long time, were allowed to suffer hell and remain toiling under the horrible yoke of a demon life, with no redemption in sight. Perhaps some of these demons were doing evil deeds that they did not out of their own free will but under obligation to carry out Ravana's orders, as he was their king. So therefore it was obligatory upon him to assume responsibility for the consequences of what they did, and so if he wished for his own spiritual welfare he must also keep their concerns in mind.

Hence, thought Ravana, he must devise a device that would ensure "collective deliverance and emancipation" of all the demons who took instructions from him and served him loyally throughout his life; he cannot abandon them when seeking good destiny for his own self. To attain this noble objective, the only practical way open for Ravana was to start a war with Lord Ram as it would automatically ensure that these poor demons would die one by one in the battles that take place, and consequently each one of them would find liberation and deliverance for his soul; not only this, all the demons would, like himself, also have a chance to have a holy glimpse of the Supreme Being in the form of Lord Ram, which would grant them eternal bliss and beatitude the way he expects for himself!

If these demons had become sinful and carried out countless evil deeds on the orders of Ravana, and in the process had shared his doomed destiny, they would now be able to share the spiritual reward of 'Mukti' (liberation, deliverance) alongside Ravana. A great and noble king is one who shares with his subjects both fortunes as well as misfortunes.

Indeed and forsooth, if we see things from a corrective perspective we would conclude that Ravana was a truly great king who thought for others, who was concerned for his entire generation who had all along sacrificed its life for him and his cause, who decided that if his demon race was ready to share a doomed destiny with him by committing horrible sins on his orders, they have an equal and moral right to enjoy liberation and deliverance if their king had the good fortune to have it.

This is the primary and the only reason why Ravana did not listen to anyone who suggested to him to return Sita to Lord Ram, because if he did so then all his secret planning for the redemption of his soul and that of other demons would be undone.]

जौं आवड़ मर्कट कटकाई । जिअहिं बिचारे निसिचर खाई ॥ ३ ॥
 कंपहिं लोकप जाकीं त्रासा । तासु नारि सभीत बड़ि हासा ॥ ४ ॥
 अस कहि बिहसि ताहि उर लाई । चलेउ सभाँ ममता अधिकाई ॥ ५ ॥
 मंदोदरी हृदयँ कर चिंता । भयउ कंत पर बिधि बिपरीता ॥ ६ ॥

jauṁ āva'i markṭa kaṭakā'ī. ji'ahim bicārē niscara khā'ī. 3.
 kampahim lōkapa jākīm trāsā. tāsu nāri sabhīta baḍi hāsā. 4.
 asa kahi bihasi tāhi ura lā'ī. calē'u sabhām' mamatā adhikā'ī. 5.
 mandōdarī hṛdayam' kara cintā. bhaya'u kanta para bidhi biparītā. 6.

What is there to fear from the army of monkeys? In case they do come here then our demons would feed upon those poor fellows in order to satisfy their hunger and for their sustenance¹. (3)

It is such an irony and a matter to laugh at because it is nothing better than a joke that he (i.e. Ravana) from whom even the Lokpals (the gods responsible for protection of the world) tremble out of fear, his wife should feel so frightened!² (4)

Saying this, Ravana laughed once again and affectionately embraced her (Mandodari). Exhibiting great fondness for her by his demeanours³, he went haughtily to his royal court. (5)

Meanwhile, when Mandodari observed that her husband was not willing to listen to any advice and had become blind to obvious signs of impending disaster, she was highly worried for him and feared for the worst. She thought to herself that the Creator has indeed turned hostile towards her husband because the latter refuses to pay heed to common sense.

[To wit, when the Creator becomes opposed to anyone, the first thing he does is to corrupt the mind of that person so much that he becomes deluded and acts in a way that is detrimental to his own interests. The Creator creates such a situation that the person pushes himself over a cliff and jumps into a deep and dark abyss of self-invited and self-inflicted disaster for which he cannot blame anyone else but his own self. Mandodari came round to the view that this is exactly what has happened with her husband.] (6)

[Note—¹The demons ate flesh of living creatures. So Ravana says that in case the army of monkeys (and bears) comes to Lanka, then he will order his demon army to catch the enemy's soldiers and make a good meal out of them. Imagine what Ravana had planned—he would close all his military canteens and food outlets, forcing the demon army to suffer from hunger, so that when the monkeys arrive in Lanka these famished demons would pounce upon them from all sides, killing the monkeys and bears for their meals if they wished to eat cooked meat, or even eating them alive if they wished so.

²All the gods were scared of Ravana. So he cites this to stress upon his wife Mandodari that he was so mighty and powerful that even the gods fear him, and therefore it is very surprising that his own wife should feel afraid of humble creatures such as human beings and monkeys, a reference to Lord Ram and his army of monkeys and bears. It is a laughable matter as this fear of hers carries no weight and merits no attention.

³So we see why Ravana did not punish Mandodari for admonishing him, not only here but later on too when the war actually commenced. All her entreaties and remonstrations with Ravana gave the impression that she was taking the side of Lord Ram, her husband's enemy, and literally belittling her own husband. No man would tolerate such an attitude of his wife—that she praises his enemy openly and repeatedly while undermining the self-respect and dignity of her husband. But Ravana only smiled at her and excused her for her irreverent behaviour towards him, and the reason is given here—that he loved her very dearly, and was so fond of her that he tolerated all that she said against him, which ordinarily he would have regarded as grave provocation and overt insinuation, almost bordering on treason and disloyalty which is punishable by death.

Another reason for his overlooking Mandodari's recriminating words was that he knew that she is not in the know of the secret of his heart, that he sees Sita as a means by which he and the rest of the demons will find their deliverance from the unholy body of a demon, and when they are killed by Lord Ram in battle they will attain emancipation and salvation for their souls. In pursuit of this grand objective he decided to neglect her.

Instead of getting irritated and angry at Mandodari, Ravana actually felt glad and appreciated her stand—because her intense worry for him proved that she loved him immensely so much so that she did not fear his wrath in trying to stop him from engaging himself in a disastrous war with Lord Ram by even going to the length of praising her husband's enemy if it could somehow dissuade him from entering into a war.

As for Mandodari, her worry was understandable and justified, because as a chaste and loyal wife her fate was directly linked with the fate of her husband Ravana; if Ravana was doomed it was her moral duty to do her best to pull him out of the pit. Actually, if she had not tried to persuade Ravana to abandon his bellicose attitude, she would have failed in her duty as a wife.

We can compare Ravana's responses to Mandodari's advice with that of his own brother Vibhishan's. While he neglected Mandodari chiding him, even embracing her and smiling at her to show how fond he was of her, when Vibhishan advised him almost a similar thing, to give Sita back to Lord Ram and make peace with the Lord, Ravana lost his temper, vehemently kicking Vibhishan in front of full court, and telling him to leave his kingdom forthwith—apropos: Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 38—to Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41. We shall be reading these verses in detail shortly.]

बैठेउ सभाँ खबरि असि पाई । सिंधु पार सेना सब आई ॥ ७ ॥

बूझेसि सचिव उचित मत कहहू । ते सब हँसे मष्ट करि रहहू ॥ ८ ॥

जितेहु सुरासुर तब श्रम नाही । नर बानर केहि लेखे माहीं ॥ ९ ॥

baiṭhē'u sabhām' khabari asi pā'ī. sindhu pāra sēnā saba ā'ī. 7.
 būjhēsi saciva ucita mata kahahū. tē saba hamśē maṣṭa kari rahahū. 8.
 jītēhu surāsura taba śrama nāhīm. nara bānara kēhi lēkhē māhīm. 9.

When he (Ravana) sat down on his throne in the court, he got the information that the whole army (of Lord Ram) has arrived on the shore of the ocean on the other side of Lanka. (7)

He asked his ministers to give whatever advice they think was proper and fit concerning the new development. All the ministers laughed in unison as if it was no issue at all, saying, 'Sit quietly and be at ease (for there is nothing to worry). (8)

When we had vanquished the gods and the demons earlier we faced no difficulty, so what do these humble men and monkeys matter for us?

[To wit, when we could easily defeat and conquer the so-called mighty gods as well as the demons who had dared to challenge us, why should we unduly tax our brains and become anxious concerning these wretched monkeys and bears, and their leader (Lord Ram) who is only a human being? Oh king Ravana, sit comfortably and stop worrying.]¹ (9)

[Note—¹The biggest proof that Ravana was under great delusion about his strength and ability is that he relied on this ill-thought advice of his ministers. He should have questioned their wisdom and asked them what were they and their army of so-called invincible demons doing when a single Kapi called Hanuman had ravaged Lanka with impunity, killing his own son Akshayakumar a great number of demon soldiers, and then had burnt the city, with no one to stop him. Where was their strength and daredevilry then? Their bluster and haughty talk deserve no merit in the view of what Hanuman did to Lanka only a short while ago.

But once again, the fact is that Destiny and Providence had other plans for Ravana and his compatriots. The fiat of fate was so strong that it pulled the plug from Ravana's own sense of wisdom, and plunged his intellect into a dark gloomy night of delusions in which he saw phantoms of victory that enticed him to follow them blindly and fall in a trap of death and destruction, and unfortunate as he was, those upon whom he relied for good and sane advice in times of uncertainties and impending disasters, those who could have actually turned the tide in his favour by pulling him away from the precipice, proved to be the ones who actually pushed him over this precipice instead of pulling him away to safety.

Why had this happened? One reason of course was that the Creator was angry with Ravana's deeds and he had devised things that would bring an end of Ravana. The other reason is that all his subordinates and confidantes, all his courtiers and ministers, all his army commanders and lieutenants, were either sycophants bending over their backs to please him, or were too terrified of him to speak things he did not want to hear. Either way, no one wished to annoy Ravana and invite his wrath. They were all aware of his nature that he was egoist, haughty and arrogant, and was not accustomed to hearing things that were not to his liking.

The following Doha no. 37 tells us the perils of a situation where a king surrounds himself with advisors who speak what the king likes to hear, instead of what is truly good for him.]

दो०. सचिव बैद गुर तीनि जौं प्रिय बोलहिं भय आस ।
राज धर्म तन तीनि कर होइ बेगिहीं नास ॥ ३७ ॥

dōhā.

saciva baida gura tīni jaum priya bōlahim bhaya āsa.
rāja dharma tana tīni kara hō'i bēgihīm nāsa. 37.

If a minister (or an advisor), a medicine man (a doctor), and a guru (teacher, guide and moral preceptor)—if these three speak, out of fear, things that their patron wishes to hear, then it is certain that the king's kingdom, the patient's body, and the correct path of righteousness that a person is expected to follow are seriously compromised, leading to their quick ruin. (Doha no. 37)

[Note—If a king's minister or his advisor is so scared of punishment that he would speak only such things as the king likes to hear, then the kingdom is ruined sooner than later.

Similarly, if a doctor is so afraid of his patient that he desists from giving him correct advice and speaking the truth about his illness and precautions that are to be taken, they obviously the patient is the one who suffers, and he may even eventually die.

Likewise, if a Guru is reluctant to give correct advice to his disciple out of fear of inviting the latter's wrath should he tell him certain things he does not like, then the disciple's future is ruined.

In all these three cases, both parties suffer. The king is ruined and the blame goes to his minister who cannot absolve himself of his moral responsibility and duty to give correct advice to his king, and prevent his ruin by being proactive in this matter. The doctor can't be excused if he does not live up to his professional credentials by not giving proper advice to his patient and treating his illness properly. The guru can't excuse himself if the fate of his disciple is periled due to his negligence.

To wit, while the king, the patient and the disciple of course have to suffer directly, the minister, the doctor and the guru too suffer immensely by way of gaining infamy and scorn in the world for being instrumental in the fall and ruin of their principals who relied upon them for their good advice and all round support. It amounts to betrayal of trust, dishonesty, disloyalty, un-professional and dishonourable behaviour on part of the minister, the doctor and the guru towards the king, the patient and the disciple respectively.]

चौ०. सोइ रावन कहूँ बनी सहाई । अस्तुति करहिं सुनाइ सुनाई ॥ १ ॥
अवसर जानि बिभीषनु आवा । भ्राता चरन सीसु तेहिं नावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sō'i rāvana kahum̐ banī sahāī. astuti karahim̐ sunā'i sunāī. 1.
avasara jāni bibhīṣanu āvā. bhrātā carana sīsu tēhim̐ nāvā. 2.

Unfortunately, however, a circumstance that is surely ruinous for an individual and detrimental for his welfare (as outlined in Doha no. 37 herein above) presented itself before Ravana, for the sycophant ministers and courtiers, ever eager to please him, falsely extolled his glories and heaped unnecessary praises on him¹. (1)

Seeing that the opportunity was ripe, Vibhishan (Ravana's younger brother) came to the court. He bowed his head reverentially before the feet of his elder brother. (2)

[Note—¹A doomed fate had, alas, deluded Ravana so much that he was very glad to hear his ministers and courtiers praising him falsely. He could not even see that they were simply trying to please him; that they were merely appeasing him to keep him in good humour. His natural wisdom and intelligence had got so highly corrupted by false praises and a sense of illusionary grandeur and majesty that he could not see the reality that was staring in his face, and believed boisterous claims that were obviously contrary to all available evidence.

Had it been otherwise, the simple question he could have asked his stupid ministers to call their bluff is this: "Hurrah for all of you. Congratulations! Indeed we must have no fear for we are so strong and invincible. But I have a query. Well, can anyone of you tell me what were you doing, and where were you, when that single Kapi named Hanuman had gone on a rampage in Lanka with impunity only a short while ago, when he killed my son Akshayakumar and so many of my demon warriors, and then set Lanka ablaze? Of course it is true that I had conquered the gods and the demons with the least effort, and in all those campaigns you had been by my side and share equal glory for success. But can you tell me what happened to your valour and gallantry with respect to that single Kapi? Why did you allow our golden city to turn black? And if you couldn't handle one fellow, please just tell me how you plan to tackle thousands of such Kapis when the army of our adversary (i.e. of Lord Ram) comes and attacks us? Now you are so loud in praising our combined strength and powers, but why were you all silent during the time the city was being ravaged by Hanuman?"

But no, Providence had eclipsed Ravana's wisdom and judgment, and he saw day when it was actually night.

There is another way in which we can view Ravana's attitude. When he observed that his chief ministers and the commanders of the demon army were, for some inexplicable reason, showing no signs of alarm at what had happened in Lanka, and inspite of all available evidence that portend doom and ruin for the whole demon race they are still talking so haughtily about victory over the enemy, it would be wiser to keep quiet for now, and to not remind them on their failure to protect the city from Hanuman's wrath, because that might ruffle their self-pride and rub their ego on the wrong side. They may feel insulted and take Ravana's chiding as personal affront, and secretly turn against him for publicly humiliating and taunting them. Should it happen then it would be disastrous for Ravana, because when the war actually breaks out he would need the support of these same ministers and commanders, and to unnecessarily provoke them now by sarcastic remarks would make them hostile towards him, a situation that no king would like to develop.

Therefore, inspite of realizing that his ministers are simply boasting of bluster, he decided to neglect them. Besides this, it also suited his own planning—for it was the secret desire of his heart to die at the hands of Lord Ram so that he can deliver his soul from the cage of his demonic body, and help it to attain emancipation and salvation.]

पुनि सिरु नाइ बैठ निज आसन । बोला बचन पाइ अनुसासन ॥ ३ ॥
जौ कृपाल पूँछिहु मोहि बाता । मति अनुरूप कहउँ हित ताता ॥ ४ ॥

puni siru nā'i baiṭha nija āsana. bōlā bacana pā'i anusāsana. 3.
jau kṛpāla pūm̐chihu mōhi bātā. mati anurūpa kaha'um̐ hita tātā. 4.

Before he sat down on his seat, Vibhishan bowed once again at the feet of his brother (in order to show great respect to him). When he got permission to speak (and give his advice on the matter being currently discussed in the assembly), he said—(3)

‘My dear brother (tātā)! Since your gracious Majesty has been kind to ask me for my views, I shall humbly tell you what I think is the best for you and for your all round welfare. (4)

जो आपन चाहै कल्याना । सुजसु सुमति सुभ गति सुख नाना ॥ ५ ॥
सो परनारि लिलार गोसाई । तजउ चउथि के चंद कि नाई ॥ ६ ॥

jō āpana cāhai kalyānā. sujasu sumati subha gati sukha nānā. 5.
sō paranāri lilāra gōsā'īm̐. taja'u ca'uthi kē canda ki nā'īm̐. 6.

If you wish to have an auspicious future and a happy fate, if you wish to have good fame and glory, if you wish to well advised and lauded in the world as a wise individual, if you desire to have an auspicious destiny for yourself, and if you want happiness and joy of all kind in your life (both present and future)—(5)

--Then oh lord (gōsā'īm̐) it is better for you not to look at (taja'u) the face of another person's wife (paranāri lilāra) like one would shun looking at the face of moon of the fourth night of its two phases (ca'uthi kē canda) (as it is believed to be a bad omen that brings ruin and suffering to the person who happens to look at it)¹. (6)

[Note—¹The moon has two phases, viz. the waxing and the waning phase. According to popular belief, it is inauspicious to view the moon on the fourth of each phase. So here Vibhishan cites this tradition to implore Ravana to discard Sita and shun looking at her as it would bring nothing but ruin for him.]

चौदह भुवन एक पति होई । भूतद्रोह तिष्ठइ नहिं सोई ॥ ७ ॥
गुन सागर नागर नर जोऊ । अलप लोभ भल कहइ न कोऊ ॥ ८ ॥

caudaha bhuvana ēka pati hō'ī. bhūtadrōha tiṣṭai nahim̐ sō'ī. 7.
guna sāgara nāgara nara jō'ū. alapa lōbha bhala kaha'i na kō'ū. 8.

Even if a man is so powerful and majestic that he rules over all the fourteen divisions of this world, yet if he turns hostile to living beings and causes suffering to them he would certainly fall down from his exalted stature.

[To wit, no matter how powerful and mighty a king might be, but if he makes ordinary creatures suffer under his rule then no one can prevent his ruin, as he invites the curse of their suffering soul, and this curse is so potent and effective that it neutralizes the benefit of any boon that the king may have.]¹ (7)

Likewise, though a man may possess a lot of virtues and is a treasury of wisdom, but if he harbours even a trace of the negative trait of greed and avarice then no one calls him noble and honourable.

[To wit, the small dark trait of greed and avarice neutralizes all the other good traits of a man, giving him a bad name though he is otherwise noble and honourable in all other respects. His wisdom and virtues take a back seat in front of one single negative character that destroys his entire reputation.]² (8)

[Note—¹What is Vibhishan hinting at? He means that though Ravana is so powerful that even the gods of heaven are terrified of him and pay their tributes to him, but he has been making all living beings suffer horribly by creating a reign of terror on this earth. He may have subdued the gods and the demons on the strength of his powerful arms, but he forgets that the cry of the humble soul of the ordinary creature that suffers due to him would prove to be like the last straw that broke the camel's back. The curse from all those who have suffered under him would be the nail in his coffin, and may be he has successfully made the mighty gods bow before him but he would have to bow himself before this curse.

Presently, this curse comes from the soul of Sita because she is suffering immensely in his captivity. This curse would determine his destiny if he lets it persist and does not make amends while there is time.

²Vibhishan says that he does not deny that Ravana was a learned demon king. 'Learned'? Yes surely, because Ravana was well versed in the scriptures. He was also a great devotee of Lord Shiva, and he had performed several rounds of Tapa (penances and sacrifices) to gain boons from Brahma, the creator. But once he acquired power and strength he became excessively greedy; he was not satisfied with his kingdom of Lanka but wished to conquer the whole creation. Further, he was not satisfied with his own wife and the large number of mistresses he had in his harem, and now he eyed Sita, the chaste and loyal wife of Lord Ram. He has crossed the red line and has done what he should not have done.

So therefore, inspite of his being wise and learned he has acted like a big fool, digging his own grave, and inviting ruin for himself as well as for the entire demon race by his reckless deeds.]

दो०. काम क्रोध मद लोभ सब नाथ नरक के पंथ ।

सब परिहरि रघुबीरहि भजहु भजहिं जेहि संत ॥ ३८ ॥

dōhā.

kāma krōdha mada lōbha saba nātha naraka kē pantha.
saba parihari raghubīrahi bhajahu bhajahim jēhi santa. 38.

Oh Lord! Passions (kāma), anger (krōdha), haughtiness (mada), greed (lōbha) etc.—all are paths leading to hell.

Abandon all such things (as they are detrimental for your welfare), and instead you must worship and adore Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram) who is worshipped and adored by all saints and pious people. (Doha no. 38)

[Note—Vibhishan's advice is in sharp contrast with what other ministers and courtiers had told Ravana. While others had pampered Ravana's ego and catered to his self-pride, speaking words that he wished to hear, Vibhishan spoke to the contrary. Naturally, a person who is as haughty and egoist as Ravana was would not like to hear what Vibhishan had to say to him. Had Vibhishan said this in a private audience, may be Ravana would have overlooked it like the way he had overlooked Mandodari's entreaties (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 36—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37).

But this was full court, and if he neglected Vibhishan's stern words said publicly he would become a laughing stock for his other courtiers. In future some of them would also gather courage to speak on his face, which no king would ever tolerate.

So, as we will read below, Ravana took exception to Vibhishan's sane advice, and finally kicked him out of his kingdom (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 2-6 that precede Doha no. 41).]

चौ०. तात राम नहिं नर भूपाला । भुवनेस्वर कालहु कर काला ॥ १ ॥
 ब्रह्म अनामय अज भगवंता । व्यापक अजित अनादि अनंता ॥ २ ॥
 गो द्विज धेनु देव हितकारी । कृपा सिंधु मानुष तनुधारी ॥ ३ ॥
 जन रंजन भंजन खल ब्राता । बेद धर्म रच्छक सुनु भ्राता ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

tāta rāma nahim nara bhūpālā. bhuvanēsvara kālahu kara kālā. 1.
 brahma anāmaya aja bhagavantā. byāpaka ajita anādi anantā. 2.
 gō dvija dhēnu dēva hitakārī. kṛpā sindhu mānuṣa tanudhārī. 3.
 jana ranjana bhanjana khala brātā. bēda dharma racchaka sunu bhrātā. 4.

My dear brother (tāta)! 'Ram' is not an ordinary human prince. In all sooth and without gainsay, he is the Supreme Lord of the entire creation, of the whole world with all its many divisions. He is indeed the Lord who supersedes even the god of death known as Kaal, who causes death of even the 'Death God'. (1)

Lord Ram is a personified form of Brahm (the Supreme Being and the cosmic Consciousness); he is free from all the taints and maladies associated with Avidya (ignorance leading to delusions) (because 'Consciousness' is eternally enlightened, wise and self-realised); he has no birth as he is eternal and infinite (because he is 'unborn' as the cosmic Consciousness neither dies nor takes birth); he is indeed 'Bhagvan' (the Lord of the world who possesses all the excellent virtues and characters that exist in this creation).

Indeed, he is all-pervading and omnipresent; he is invincible; he is without a beginning; and he has no end either as he is infinite and eternal.¹ (2)

The Lord is the supreme well-wisher and protector of humble and meek creatures represented by a ‘cow’, holy and pious men represented by ‘Brahmins’, the ‘earth’ that is like the mother who sustains and nourishes all living beings, and the different ‘gods’ who protect and support the entire creation.

The Lord, being an ocean of mercy, compassion, kindness, magnanimity, benevolence and grace, assumed the form of a human being as ‘Ram’ in order to fulfill his above obligations.*²

[*This verse can be read as follows also: “Lord Ram, who is an ocean of mercy and compassion, is the Supreme Being who is the best well-wisher and protector of the entire creation and all its living beings, such as the cows who represent meek and humble creatures, the Brahmins who represent men who are holy and pious, the earth that is the crucible of life, and the many gods who protect and support this entire creation. Verily indeed, it is the same Supreme Being who has manifested himself in the form of a human being known as Lord Ram.”]³ (3)

Listen my brother (*sunu bhrātā*)! The Lord (Ram) grants happiness and joy to all living beings—because on the one hand he is the destroyer or eliminator of all those who are wicked, crooked, vile and evil, and on the other hand he is a protector of the Vedas (scriptures and their spiritual principles) and Dharma (principles of righteousness, auspiciousness, probity, propriety and goodness). (4)

[Note—¹It will be remarked here that Vibhishan has made out the case of Lord Ram as a personified form of the Supreme Being himself. An exactly similar case will be made out in favour of Lord Ram by Mandodari, Ravana’s wife, later on when the war is in full swing when she tells Ravana that Lord Ram is no a human prince whom he thinks he will vanquish with the might of his arms, because the Lord is the all-pervading and almighty Supreme Being known as Brahm himself, and therefore Ravana would do good to himself as well as the entire demon clan by abandoning his stubbornness and surrendering himself before the Lord—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 14—to Doha no. 15. This was Mandodari’s third attempt to persuade Ravana to call off the war.

²Refer to: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precedes Doha no. 187 where we read that Lord Vishnu, the cosmic form of Brahm and one of the Trinity Gods, has himself said that he will take a birth as a human being in order to eliminate the demons and restore peace on earth when the gods and mother earth had fervently prayed to the Lord to protect them from the terror of the demons led by their king Ravana.

³Lord Shiva, the most enlightened of all the gods, has repeatedly reiterated the fact that Lord Ram was none but the Supreme Being himself, the Lord who is eager to do whatever is necessary in order to make all the living beings happy and joyful—some examples are Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Chaupai line no. 1 and Chanda line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 51; (ii) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 116; (iii) Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 119; (iv) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 120; (v) Doha no. 121 along with Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede it.]

ताहि बयरु तजि नाइअ माथा । प्रनतारति भंजन रघुनाथा ॥ ५ ॥
 देहु नाथ प्रभु कहूँ बैदेही । भजहु राम बिनु हेतु सनेही ॥ ६ ॥
 सरन गएँ प्रभु ताहु न त्यागा । बिस्व द्रोह कृत अघ जेहि लागा ॥ ७ ॥
 जासु नाम त्रय ताप नसावन । सोइ प्रभु प्रगट समुझु जियँ रावन ॥ ८ ॥

tāhi bayaru taji nā'i'a māthā. pranatārati bhañjana raghunāthā. 5.
 dēhu nātha prabhu kahūṁ baidēhī. bhajahu rāma binu hētu sanēhī. 6.
 sarana ga'ēmṁ prabhu tāhu na tyāgā. bisva drōha kṛta agha jēhi lāgā. 7.
 jāsu nāma traya tāpa nasāvana. sō'i prabhu pragaṭa samujhu jiyamṁ rāvana. 8.

You must abandon all animosity and hostility with that Lord, and instead bow your head before him. Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram) is the one who removes all the sorrows and worries of those who seek shelter with him, and who surrender themselves before him.

[To wit, you need not worry about the sort of reception you may get when you approach Lord Ram with the intention to surrender and beg forgiveness. I assure you that you will be welcomed most warmly, and all your past imprudence and evil deeds would be instantly forgotten. Don't be afraid that you will be insulted or punished by the Lord; on the contrary, you will find him most amiable and affable by nature.] (5)

Oh my lord (nātha), I beseech you to give Vaidehi (Sita) back to the Lord (prabhu; Lord Ram), and worship him who has selfless affection for one and all, who loves everyone without there being any vested interest in doing so.¹ (6)

[Note—¹A similar fervent plea is made by Ravana's wife Mandodari in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 6—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 7.

But unfortunately, Ravana listened neither to Vibhishan nor to Mandodari.]

दो०. बार बार पद लागउँ बिनय करउँ दससीस ।
 परिहरि मान मोह मद भजहु कोसलाधीस ॥ ३९ (क) ॥
 मुनि पुलस्ति निज सिष्य सन कहि पठई यह बात ।
 तुरत सो मैं प्रभु सन कही पाइ सुअवसरु तात ॥ ३९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

bāra bāra pada lāga'umṁ binaya kara'umṁ dasasīsa.
 parihari māna mōha mada bhajahu kōsalādhīsa. 39 (a).
 muni pulasti nija siṣya sana kahi paṭha'ī yaha bāta.
 turata sō maimṁ prabhu sana kahī pā'i su'avasarū tāta. 39 (b).

Oh my ten-headed brother (dasasīsa)! I repeatedly bow my head at your feet and plead most earnestly with you that you ought to give up your sense of false pride and ego, you ought to abandon your delusions arising out of ignorance of the reality, and

you ought to shun haughtiness and stubbornness. Instead, you ought to worship and adore the Lord of Kaushal, i.e. Lord Ram. (Chanda line nos. 1-2)

My dear brother (tāta)! Sage Pulastya has sent this message for you through one of his disciples, and as soon as I found an opportune moment I have conveyed it to you.¹ (Chanda line nos. 3-4)

[Note—¹This remark by Vibhishan clearly implies that he was visited by two gentleman—one was Hanuman (refer—Sundar Kand, Doha no. 6 along with Chaupai line nos. 2-8 that precede it), and the other was sage Pulastya's disciple.

Since he now says that the messenger of Pulastya had come just ahead of his coming to the court to deliver the message to Ravana, it means that when sage Pulastya heard of the developments in Lanka, i.e. about Ravana bringing Sita and the subsequent arrival of Hanuman and his destruction of Lanka by burning it, he was extremely alarmed as he feared for the worst for his own descendants, because Ravana was his grandson.

What is that “opportune moment” that Vibhishan is talking about? Ravana has summoned all his courtiers and commanders, seeking their opinion regarding the course of action that he should take in the view that the army of Lord Ram has come near, and an assault on Lanka was imminent. All his advisors were giving their opinions; and so this was the time when Vibhishan could convey Pulastya's message to Ravana.]

चौ०. माल्यवंत अति सचिव सयाना । तासु बचन सुनि अति सुख माना ॥ १ ॥

तात अनुज तव नीति बिभूषन । सो उर धरहु जो कहत बिभीषन ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

mālyavanta ati saciva sayānā. tāsu bacana suni ati sukha mānā. 1.

tāta anuja tava nīti bibhūṣana. sō ura dharahu jō kahata bibhīṣana. 2.

Malyawant, who was a very wise and sagacious minister of Ravana, felt very pleased and happy when he heard the words of Vibhishan. (1)

Endorsing his views fully, he advised Ravana, ‘My dear (tāta)! Your younger brother is an epitome of wisdom, sagacity and prudence. So I advise you to give credence to what Vibhishan has told you, pay serious attention to what he had said, and enshrine his advice in your heart as something that is extremely good for you.’ (2)

रिपु उत्तरकष कहत सठ दोऊ । दूरि न करहु इहाँ हइ कोऊ ॥ ३ ॥

माल्यवंत गृह गयउ बहोरी । कहइ बिभीषनु पुनि कर जोरी ॥ ४ ॥

ripu utakaraṣa kahata saṭha dō'ū. dūri na karahu ihām' ha'i kō'ū. 3.

mālyavanta gr̥ha gaya'u bahōrī. kaha'i bibhīṣanu puni kara jōrī. 4.

Ravana took Malyawant's advice as an open affront to his self-respect, dignity and majesty, so he became very angry and retorted, ‘These two fellows (Malyawant and

Vibhishan) are (shamelessly) extolling the virtues of my enemy and praising him. Is there no one here (in the court) who can take them away from my presence?’ (3)

Malyawant went home, but Visbhishan stayed back to make another attempt to persuade Ravana to mend his ways. Vibhishan joined his hands in submission and said most politely -- (4)

सुमति कुमति सब कें उर रहहीं । नाथ पुरान निगम अस कहहीं ॥ ५ ॥
जहाँ सुमति तहँ संपति नाना । जहाँ कुमति तहँ बिपति निदाना ॥ ६ ॥
तव उर कुमति बसी बिपरीता । हित अनहित मानहु रिपु प्रीता ॥ ७ ॥
कालराति निसिचर कुल केरी । तेहि सीता पर प्रीति घनेरी ॥ ८ ॥

sumati kumati saba kēṁ ura rahahīm. nātha purāna nigama asa kahahīm. 5.
jahām̐ sumati tahām̐ sampati nānā. jahām̐ kumati tahām̐ bipati nidānā. 6.
tava ura kumati basī biparītā. hita anahita mānahu ripu prītā. 7.
kālarāti nisicara kula kērī. tēhi sītā para prīti ghanērī. 8.

‘Oh Lord (nātha)! The Vedas and the Purans (ancient scriptures) say that every living being harbours two types of qualities in his heart—one is good and another is bad. It is a natural process of creation and there is nothing unusual about it¹. (5)

Where there is wisdom and auspiciousness in one’s thoughts and emotions then access to all sorts of prosperity and happiness is available to him, while doom and gloom is the destiny of those whose wisdom is corrupted and thoughts and emotions are dark and evil. (6)

Unfortunately, your heart has become so deluded by evil emotions and corrupted wisdom that you have started seeing things in the wrong light. That is why you are misled to regard as bad what actually is good for you and your future, and you treat those who actually are your well-wishers and true friends as being your enemy and opponents². (7)

Alas! You have, most regrettably, begin to harbour great affection for Sita who actually represents the dark foreboding cloud of the night of the doomsday that hovers over the demon race, without realizing the peril in which your ill-thoughts are leading you to³. (8)

[Note—¹All living beings in this world have two types of thoughts and emotions—one type that is positive and constructive, and the other type that is negative and destructive. The character of an individual and the course his fate takes depends on the net effect that these two types of thoughts and emotional qualities produce on him. How an individual’s thoughts and emotions affect him decides his actions and the course his life takes, which in turn decides his destiny. If good and auspicious thoughts, refined wisdom and right emotions play a dominant role in his life and its deeds, the person’s character shines like the sun and he attains an exalted destiny, while the reverse happens if his thoughts and emotions are bad and negative.

²Vibhishan means that Ravana is so deluded by his ill-fated destiny that he regards Malyawant and Vibhishan, who are his true well-wishers, as his enemies who are criticizing him and finding faults with him, while treating the other courtiers, who are actually ill-witted and self-serving sycophants and flattering yes-men who only say things which Ravana wishes to hear in order to keep him in good humour, as his friends and faithful advisors.

A king, or for that matter any person, who lends his ears to those who speak falsehood just to keep him happy and pleased, is sure to come to ruin.

³Vibhishan sternly scolds Ravana, and clearly tells him that Sita will become the last nail in his coffin, that Providence has brought her here so that the time-tested and irrevocable Law of Nature that “what takes birth must die one day” applies to Ravana and his demon race too, though he had been granted immunity from death by the virtue of various boons he had extracted from Brahma, the creator, by doing severe Tapa (penances and austerities).

This Providence had first corrupted his mind and intellect, making him haughty and arrogant in the false sense of invincibility and the superiority of his power, strength and majesty, making him believe that there is no power in creation that is greater than his, and he can do whatever he likes with impunity, for an eternity. The circle seems to have completed its full cycle, and to solder its two ends together, Providence prevailed upon Ravana to bring Sita to Lanka so that the final act of the epic drama of “creation and destruction” can be played on the stage and his final end can be brought about.

That is why he cannot think correctly and in the right direction; that is why he lends his ears to wrong advice and neglects good advice. But alas, what can be done, for it is the fiat of fate and the call of his destiny.]

दो०. तात चरन गहि मागउँ राखहु मोर दुलार ।
सीता देहु राम कहूँ अहित न होइ तुम्हार ॥ ४० ॥

dōhā.

tāta carana gahi māga'um' rākhahu mōra dulāra.
sītā dēhu rāma kahum' ahita na hō'i tumhāra. 40.

My dear brother (tāta)! I hold your feet and beg you to remind you of your natural affection for me¹. [Brother, I know you love me, and that is why I have mustered courage to speak you so boldly. I wish for your good and welfare as it is directly linked to the fate of the whole demon race. Please don't take me in the wrong light, and pay heed to my advice. I am your well-wisher and have confidence that you repose trust in me, that you believe I cannot say anything that would put you in peril. So therefore, I have this to say to you ---]

Please give Sita back to Lord Ram, and be assured that by doing this no harm shall come to you, and no interests of yours will be compromised.' (Doha no. 40)

[Note—¹Vibhishan publicly acknowledges that Ravana had affection for him. This was a fact and it will become obvious when we take into consideration that Vibhishan openly practiced his religious views and had signs of Lord Hari, such as a Tulsi plant (basil plant) and the name of the Lord, displayed in the front of his home in the center

of Lanka, without Ravana once objecting to it. Vibhishan used to pronounce loudly Lord Ram's holy name the first thing in the morning, loud enough for it to be heard outside his home and over a large part of the neighbour, and we have already read that this practice of his had enabled Hanuman to recognize him as someone who would be friendly at the time when he (Hanuman) was searching for Sita (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 6).

This has a corollary though. It implies that Ravana tolerated the presence of a saintly soul in Lanka, that he was not totally allergic to the name of Lord God and opposed to religious practices.

We have also read that when he brought Sita he had determined for himself that since he was very sinful the only way he can find deliverance for his soul and attain emancipation and salvation was to get himself killed by Lord Ram, and to do so it was necessary to bring Sita to Lanka, as it would force the Lord to come and kill him in order to free her. And in case Lord Ram was not the Supreme Being but an ordinary human prince, then also Ravana had nothing to lose—for then he would keep Sita as one of his countess mistresses. (Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 23.)

To wit, if we take a holistic view of what was going in the mind of Ravana during those crucial moments of his life, we would come to the conclusion that his stubbornness in keeping Sita as a captive, and refusing to do otherwise, was a well-thought out and planned decision.

But a person's destiny, though said to be pre-determined even at the time of his birth, is subject to profound alterations and changes in course, either for good or for bad, during his present life, because the actual destination for a living being is determined more by his own thoughts and deeds during the course of his present life than by what he has brought with him at the time of birth as a baggage from his previous life.

So therefore, a person is responsible for his own fate, and there is no purpose served by blaming either Providence or Destiny for one's doom or elevation in life. A good birth and upbringing and all sorts of positive opportunities in life are no insurance for an assured good destiny if the person concerned is not conscientious enough to decide what is good and what is bad for him. If he chooses to lead a sinful and pervert life because worldly temptations and sensual pleasures of the material world appeal more to his mind than observing the principles of self-control, righteousness, probity and propriety, if he allows delusions and temptations to overcome his wisdom and have the better of him, then he is surely destined to be doomed, and no one can save him.

In the present case of Ravana the same principle applies. He was born in a family of great sages, was a Brahmin by birth, was highly learned in the scriptures, was a great devotee of Lord Shiva, had done remarkable Tapa (penances and austerity), and had immense strength which he could have properly utilized for the welfare of his demon race and expansion of his kingdom, but he misused all the facilities available to him in order to satisfy his personal lust and passion, and his greed for power and gratification of his sensual desires.

This is evident here for he had great love for Vibhishan and had allowed the latter to pursue his religious beliefs and way of life unhindered till now. But when he was asked by the same Vibhishan to give Sita back to Lord Ram, Ravana lost his cool and exploded in anger as will be clear when we read the verses herein below. He not only will sternly rebuke Vibhishan using harsh words of recrimination, virtually

accusing him of treason, betrayal and disloyalty, he will also kick him in full court and tell him to quit his kingdom.]

चौ०. बुध पुरान श्रुति संमत बानी । कही बिभीषन नीति बखानी ॥ १ ॥
 सुनत दसानन उठा रिसाई । खल तोहि निकट मृत्यु अब आई ॥ २ ॥
 जिअसि सदा सठ मोर जिआवा । रिपु कर पच्छ मूढ़ तोहि भावा ॥ ३ ॥
 कहसि न खल अस को जग माहीं । भुज बल जाहि जिता मैं नाहीं ॥ ४ ॥
 मम पुर बसि तपसिन्ह पर प्रीती । सठ मिलु जाइ तिन्हहि कहु नीती ॥ ५ ॥

caupāī.

budha purāna śruti sammata bānī. kahī bibhīṣana nīti bakhānī. 1.
 sunata dasānana uṭhā risāī. khala tōhi nikṭa mṛtyu aba āī. 2.
 ji'asi sadā saṭha mōra ji'āvā. ripu kara paccha mūrha tōhi bhāvā. 3.
 kahasi na khala asa kō jaga māhīm. bhuja bala jāhi jītā maim nāhīm. 4.
 mama pura basi tapasinha para prīti. saṭha milu jā'i tinahi kahu nīti. 5.

What Vibhishan had said was wise and prudent, and was in accordance with the principles of good conduct, righteousness, propriety and probity as laid down by the Purans and Vedas (scriptures). (1)

But unfortunately the 10-headed Ravana took his advice in the wrong light, and when he heard what Vibhishan said to him (as narrated in the previous verses), he got up angrily and scolded him harshly¹, saying vehemently, 'Oh you wretched and ugly fellow; it seems your death has come calling you, and it is apparently imminent. (2)

Fie, oh you fool! You have been sustained by me and have lived under my patronage. In spite of that, oh you ungrateful and disgraceful fellow, you choose to favour my enemy and plead his cause as if you were his advocate². (3)

Oh you wretch and unfaithful fellow! Tell me who is strong and powerful enough in this world whom I have not been able to vanquish relying solely on the strength and power of my own arms? (4)

You live in my city (Lanka) under my protection and patronage, but you dare to prefer to take sides with my enemy by showing affection for that ascetic (Lord Ram). Fie to you, you stupid fellow.

Well, let it be as you wish. Go away from me and meet that ascetic to give you advice to him; go and preach him wisdom regarding the laws and rules concerning what is good and righteous.³ (5)

[Note—¹As Ravana was doomed, he could not think rightly. As a result of this, instead of heeding Vibhishan's advice and taking it in the right spirit, he took it as a personal affront to his majesty and authority as well as a challenge to his wisdom and intellect. He became extremely peeved and angry, and lost control over himself.

²To wit, I allowed you to follow your own religious practices and did not cause any obstacles in your path. I treated you kindly and with a soft corner in my heart. I

protected you from harm from any of my demons. But you have betrayed me and my trust in you. You secretly harbour animosity for me, and favour my enemy instead. You are very ungrateful and disloyal. While you preach me wisdom and good manners by saying that it is improper to keep another person's wife, but you yourself have no compunctions in betraying your own brother and neglecting his love for you; you do not even value how much he has allowed you freedom and how he has been favouring you throughout your life. Oh you ungrateful wretch! And now you prefer to take sides with my enemy as if he was your best well-wisher and grand patron, and as if your own brother is your enemy!

³Well then, if this is the case you are most welcome. Leave me alone to face my destiny, and go and join him whom you think is your well-wisher! Get out of my sight this very instant; I do not wish to see your face even for a moment.]

अस कहि कीन्हेसि चरन प्रहारा । अनुज गहे पद बारहिं बारा ॥ ६ ॥
 उमा संत कइ इहइ बड़ाई । मंद करत जो करइ भलाई ॥ ७ ॥
 तुम्ह पितु सरिस भलेहिं मोहि मारा । रामु भजें हित नाथ तुम्हारा ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi kīnhēsi carana prahārā. anuja gahē pada bārahīm bārā. 6.
 umā santa ka'i iha'i barā'ī. manda karata jō kara'i bhalā'ī. 7.
 tumha pitu sarisa bhalēhim mōhi mārā. rāmu bhajēm hita nātha tumhārā. 8.

Thus scolding Vibhishan harshly, Ravana vehemently kicked him. Vibhishan on his part fell at Ravana's feet repeatedly and respectfully clasped them in his hands (to show his due regard for his elder brother)¹. (6)

Lord Shiva (the primary narrator of this epic tale) said to his divine consort Uma, 'Oh Uma! This is a unique quality of a saint—that he always thinks of the other person's welfare and good even if that person causes him harm and suffering². (7)

Vibhishan told Ravana, 'You are like my father (being my elder brother). So indeed it is for my own good that you have hit (kicked) me³. But oh lord, I beg to repeat it once again that your good and welfare lies in worshipping Lord Ram and having devotion for him (by surrendering yourself and sending Sita back as a token of this).' (8)

[Note—¹We note here that Ravana has "kicked" Vibhishan but the latter showed no sign of anger or ill-will towards him. Instead of cursing or abusing Ravana, Vibhishan had fell at his feet and respectfully held them in his hands to show due respect to him as his elder brother.

Viewed from a different perspective, Vibhishan thought that it was prudent and wise for him to suppress his anger for the present as he was surrounded by Ravana's soldiers, and if Ravana wished he would have him arrested and killed instantly. So it was imperative to maintain his cool so that he can get out of the court and escape from Lanka. He ought to show utmost caution at present, and not do anything to precipitate disaster. So therefore, he bowed at the feet of Ravana to calm him down and not aggravate matters further.

A little later in the story we will read that Ravana had kicked another of his close associate to express his anger and disgust when advised to call-off his

confrontationist attitude towards Lord Ram and send the Lord's wife Sita back to him. His name is Suk, and he was sent by Ravana to spy on Vibhishan after he left the kingdom of Lanka and went to seek refuge with Lord Ram. Suk was so extremely impressed by the warm and affectionate reception that Vibhishan was given by the Lord that he himself decided to leave his sinful and evil master Ravana, and instead seek shelter with the Lord. So when he went back to Lanka and gave his report to Ravana, highly lauding Lord Ram's graceful and kind nature, and advising Ravana to give Sita back to him, the demon king lost his cool. Peeved and exasperated beyond tolerance, Ravana kicked him, giving Suk an excuse to quit Lanka and go surrender before Lord Ram. This episode is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 53—to Chaupai line no. 12 that precedes Doha no. 57. Refer especially to Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57 where we read about Ravana kicking Suk.

²Lord Shiva stresses that this is one of the many grand qualities of true saints—that they always think good of others even if they are made to suffer themselves due to the evil nature of those whose good such saints think of.

³If a father scolds and hits his son whom he loves dearly, it is because he wishes for his son's good, and not because he hates his own son. So Vibhishan says that if Ravana thought it fit to admonish and kick him, then surely it is for his long-term good. He welcomes it instead of taking it as an insult.

What was for Vibhishan's good? Ravana loved him and wished that he survives the war to carry forward the name of his family. He did not want that when the war actually breaks out he would have to force Vibhishan to join it on his side and fight with Lord Ram, and probably get killed in battle. In the course of the war, as we shall read in due course, all kith and kin of Ravana were killed, one by one, except Vibhishan. When the war ended, Lord Ram put Vibhishan on the throne of Lanka as its next king, thus continuing the line of Ravana's own family. But if Ravana had not kicked Vibhishan out, then in all probability the latter would have been compelled to join the battle and consequently get killed. Who then would have ascended the throne of Lanka, and how then would the family line of Ravana continue?

When a father feels that a calamity is looming on the horizon from which there is no escape, his first thought is to put one of his dearest sons to safety so that in case the things go in the wrong direction and all the rest of the family are annihilated, at least there would be one member to carry on the family name and tree to the next generation.

This is exactly what Ravana secretly thought vis-à-vis Vibhishan. Internally Ravana was frustrated with the evil life of a demon, and he wished that the next generation should be pious and devout and not like himself. Vibhishan was the only family member who could fit the bill and fulfill this secret desire of his heart. But to ensure it, it was necessary to put Vibhishan out of danger's reach, and the only way to do it was to send him out of Lanka.

And the best way to ensure that Vibhishan is crowned the next king of Lanka was to force him to join Lord Ram's camp—for Ravana, wise and far-thinking as he was, could predict this happening in the near future, and it was a premonition that he felt would definitely come true.

Later on in the story we shall read that his other brother, Kumbhakarna, too has lauded Vibhishan and praised him as the torch-bearer of his family's good name and fame when the former was forced by Ravana to join battle against Lord Ram.

Kumbhakarna had met Vibhishan in the battle-field. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-8 that precede Doha no. 64.

We will also read that Kumbhakarna too had chided Ravana for picking up a war with Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Doha no. 62—to Chaupai line nos. 1-6 that precede Doha no. 63.]

सचिव संग लै नभ पथ गयऊ । सबहि सुनाइ कहत अस भयऊ ॥ ९ ॥

saciva saṅga lai nabha patha gaya'ū. sabahi sunā'i kahata asa bhaya'ū. 9.

Meanwhile, Vibhishan took his trusted minister with him and went up in the sky. [Obviously, Vibhishan had an air plane at his disposal on which he ascended to the sky along with his trusted aide.]

Once there (in safety), he declared aloud so that all (who watched him from the ground) could hear him. (9)

दो०. रामु सत्यसंकल्प प्रभु सभा कालबस तोरि ।
मैं रघुबीर सरन अब जाऊँ देहु जनि खोरि ॥ ४१ ॥

dōhā.

rāmu satyasaṅkalpa prabhu sabhā kālabasa tōri.
mairṁ raghubīra sarana aba jā'um' dēhu jani khōri. 41.

Vibhishan addressed Ravana from the sky and declared, 'Lord Ram is true to his vows and commitments¹. He is all-able, strong and powerful. On the other hand, your council of ministers is doomed by ill-fated destiny (because they fail to show you the right path, and instead are leading you by the hand to your doom).

Now I am going to take shelter at the feet of Lord Raghubir (Lord Sri Ram) and surrender myself before him; don't blame me any more².' (Doha no. 41)

[Note—¹What was Lord Ram's commitment? He, in his primary form as Lord Vishnu, had promise the gods and mother earth that he would personally eliminate the demons and slay Ravana to free the world from their horrors. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-8 that precede Doha no. 187.

Once again, Lord Ram, while passing through the forest, had also promised the sages and ascetics residing there that he will surely kill the demons who had been causing them a lot of trouble. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 9 along with Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede it.

So now the time has come for the Lord to fulfill these vows, and no one can stop him.

²Ravana has himself told Vibhishan to go and join Lord Ram—apropos: Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes this Doha no. 41 herein above.]

चौ०. अस कहि चला बिभीषनु जबहीं । आयूहीन भए सब तबहीं ॥ १ ॥

साधु अवग्या तुरत भवानी । कर कल्याण अखिल कैहानी ॥ २ ॥

रावन जबहिं बिभीषण त्यागा । भयउ बिभव बिनु तबहिं अभागा ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

asa kahi calā bibhīṣanu jabahīm. āyūhīna bha'e saba tabahīm. 1.
sādhu avagyā turata bhavānī. kara kalyāna akhila kai hānī. 2.
rāvana jabahīm bibhīṣana tyāgā. bhaya'u bibhava binu tabahīm abhāgā. 3.

No sooner had Vibhishan left the city after strongly admonishing Ravana than the doom of the demon race was sealed. (1)

[Lord Shiva told his divine consort Parvati, also known by the name of Bhavani—]
'Oh Bhavani! An insult or disrespect shown to a saint invites immediate repercussions, as it instantly neutralizes all blessings in its wake and paves the way for strong punishment of the offender. (2)

The moment Ravana abandoned Vibhishan, all his hopes for a happy life and a good fate vanished; his glory was lost, his future was assuredly doomed, and he became luckless. (3)

चलेउ हरषि रघुनायक पाहीं । करत मनोरथ बहु मन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥

देखिहउँ जाइ चरन जलजाता । अरुन मृदुल सेवक सुखदाता ॥ ५ ॥

जे पद परसि तरी रिषिनारी । दंडक कानन पावनकारी ॥ ६ ॥

जे पद जनकसुताँ उर लाए । कपट कुरंग संग धर धाए ॥ ७ ॥

हर उर सर सरोज पद जेई । अहोभाग्य मैं देखिहउँ तेई ॥ ८ ॥

calē'u haraṣi raghunāyaka pāhīm. karata manōratha bahu mana māhīm. 4.
dēkhiha'um jā'i carana jalajātā. aruna mṛdula sēvaka sukhadātā. 5.
jē pada parasi tarī riṣinārī. daṇḍaka kānana pāvanakārī. 6.
jē pada janakasutām̐ ura lā'ē. kapaṭa kuraṅga saṅga dhara dhā'ē. 7.
hara ura sara sarōja pada jē'ī. ahōbhāgya mair̐ dēkhiha'um̐ tē'ī. 8.

Meanwhile, Vibhishan felt himself exceedingly fortunate; he was very glad and his heart was exhilarated as he proceeded to meet Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram).

On the way he was thinking of so many fortunate circumstances, and had so many happy expectations¹ for himself in the days to come that his joy knew no bounds. (4)

"Now I shall go and have a divine glimpse of the sole of the holy lotus like feet of the Lord that are like a red lotus flower, are soft to touch, and are providers of joy and comfort to devotees. (5)

These are the same holy feet of Lord Ram the touch of which not only liberated the wife of the sage from her curse², but also purified the cursed Dandakaranya forest when the Lord passed through it³. (6)

These are the same holy feet of Lord Ram which the daughter of Janak (i.e. Sita) reverentially enshrines in her heart⁴, and which ran behind the decoy golden deer to deliver his soul from the evil body of a demon⁵. (7)

For sooth, how extremely fortunate I am that today I would be able to have a divine glimpse of those holy lotus like feet of Lord Ram that bloom so reverentially in the lake-like shrine of Lord Shiva's heart⁶. (8)

[Note—¹What were Vibhishan's great expectations; why was he so happy? They are wonderfully enumerated in Tulsidas' classic "Geetawali Ramayan", Sundar Kand, verse nos. 29 and 30. We shall be reading them in detail in this Chapter no. 9, Section no. 9.3 of our Book.

²This incidence refers to the liberation of Ahilya, the wife of sage Guatam, when Lord Ram touched her by his feet. Ahilya was cursed by the sage to become a stone due to some misunderstanding. But when the sage realized that she was not at fault, he blessed her that one day when Lord Ram would pass that way and touch her with his holy feet, she would find deliverance from her curse and come back to him in the heaven. This story is narrated in Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 210—to Doha no. 211.

³The Dandakaranya forest too was cursed. Sage Agastya advised Lord Ram to make it pure by walking through its inhospitable terrain. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 16 that precedes Doha no. 13.

⁴Sita had enshrined in her heart an image of Lord Ram that she last saw of him as he went behind the golden deer; she meditated on this image and focused her mind on the holy feet of Lord Ram throughout her stay in captivity in Lanka. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, (i) Aranya Kand, Doha no. 29-b; and (ii) Sundar Kand, Doha no. 30.

⁵This alludes to the event when Lord Ram had gone behind the demon Marich who was forced by Ravana to disguise himself as a golden deer so that Sita could be abducted by the latter (Ravana). Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 25; Chaupai line nos. 1-11 that precede Doha no. 27.

⁶Lord Shiva is renowned to be the greatest devotee of Lord Ram. The very memory of Lord Ram thrills Shiva; he constantly meditates on the holy name of Lord Ram. In fact, the divine story of the Ramayan was first conceived in the mind and heart of Shiva while he was meditating. There are numerous instances of Shiva's unparalleled and singular devotion for Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, (i) Doha no. 111 along with Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precede it; (ii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 19; (iii) Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 30; (iv) Chaupai line no. 11 that precedes Doha no. 35; (v) Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51; and (vi) Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 108.]

दो०. जिन्ह पायन्ह के पादुकिन्ह भरतु रहे मन लाइ ।

ते पद आजु बिलोकिहउँ इन्ह नयनन्हि अब जाइ ॥ ४२ ॥

dōhā.

jinha pāyanha kē pādukanhi bharatu rahē mana lā'i.
tē pada āju bilōkiha'um'inha nayanani aba jā'i. 42.

How indeed lucky am I that today I shall be able to go and see with my own eyes those holy feet whose wooden sandals were accepted by Bharat with such affection and reverence, and which have become a center of his devotion now, for he worships them with great faith and love^{1*}.” (Doha no. 42)

[Note—¹Bharat was the younger brother of Lord Ram. He was not present in Ayodhya when the Lord was sent to forest exile; so as soon as he came to know of this sad development he immediately decided to go to the forest and bring Lord Ram back. However, Lord Ram had to fulfill his mandate of eliminating the demons, and therefore it was imperative for him to stay in the forest and take necessary actions to successfully accomplish this task.

So, when the Lord persuaded Bharat to go back from the forest and wait for him in Ayodhya, Bharat requested him for some token that he could use as a symbolic presence of the Lord. Then Lord Ram had given Bharat his wooden sandals, which the latter accepted with the greatest reverence, and upon his arrival back in Ayodhya Bharat put those sandals on the throne of the kingdom of Ayodhya to represent Lord Ram, and himself went to live like an ascetic at a nearby place.

These developments are the main topics in Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand. However, the following verses can be cited specifically with reference to the wooden sandals of Lord Ram and how Bharat worshipped them—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line nos. 4-8 that precede Doha no. 316; and Doha no. 323—to Doha no. 325.

*It is to be noted here that the “present tense” has been used by Vibhishan. This is because while these events were unfolding in the forest, from Sita’s abduction till the time the army of Lord Ram pitched camp on the shore of the ocean, and even beyond till the time of the end of the war of Lanka, Bharat was worshipping the sandals of Lord Ram back in Ayodhya.]

चौ०. एहि बिधि करत सप्रेम बिचारा । आयउ सपदि सिंधु एहि पारा ॥ १ ॥
कपिन्ह बिभीषनु आवत देखा । जाना कोउ रिपु दूत बिसेषा ॥ २ ॥
ताहि राखि कपीस पहि आए । समाचार सब ताहि सुनाए ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ēhi bidhi karata saprēma bicārā. āya'u sapadi sindhu ēhim pārā. 1.
kapinha bibhīṣanu āvata dēkhā. jānā kō'u ripu dūta bisēṣā. 2.
tāhi rākhi kapīsa pahim ā'ē. samācāra saba tāhi sunā'ē. 3.

In this way, harbouring many happy thoughts and glad tidings in his heart, he (Vibhishan) lost no time to arrive on the shore of the ocean (where Lord Ram had pitched his camp with his army). (1)

When the Kapis (the monkey warriors of Lord Ram's army) who were on duty as look-outs saw Vibhishan come, they thought that he was a special messenger of their enemy (Ravana). (2)

They stopped him and told him to wait, and then went to their king (Sugriv) to inform the latter of the whole matter. (3)

कह सुग्रीव सुनहु रघुराई । आवा मिलन दसानन भाई ॥ ४ ॥
 कह प्रभु सखा बूझिए काहा । कहइ कपीस सुनहु नरनाहा ॥ ५ ॥
 जानि न जाइ निसाचर माया । कामरूप केहि कारन आया ॥ ६ ॥
 भेद हमार लेन सठ आवा । राखिअ बाँधि मोहि अस भावा ॥ ७ ॥

kaha sugrīva sunahu raghurā'ī. āvā milana dasānana bhā'ī. 4.
 kaha prabhu sakhā būjhi'ai kāhā. kaha'i kapīsa sunahu naranāhā. 5.
 jāni na jā'i nisācara māyā. kāmarūpa kēhi kārana āyā. 6.
 bhēda hamāra lēna saṭha āvā. rākhi'a bām'dhi mōhi asa bhāvā. 7.

Upon hearing the news of the arrival of Vibhishan, Sugriv approached Lord Ram and said, 'Listen oh the Lord of the Raghus (Lord Ram)! The brother of the ten-headed Ravana has come to meet you. [What should we do in this matter?]' (4)

The Lord (prabhu) replied by asking Sugriv, 'Oh my friend (sakhā)! What is your opinion in this matter?'

The king of the Kapis (Sugriv) said, 'Oh King (naranāhā), listen; I'll tell you what I think. (5)

No one can know what kind of deceit and dirty trick the demons have. They are very cunning and pretentious, and assume any form that suits them. It is therefore very difficult to say for what real purpose he has come here.

[To wit, he may pretend to be very friendly towards us, he may act as if he is our well-wisher, but actually he may have come with some ulterior motive, and we can never know what his real intentions are.] (6)

I think that this rascal has come to spy upon us and gather intelligence about our secrets (such as about our military strength and strategy). Therefore I feel that it would be wiser for us to tie him up and keep him captive. [This will also help us to interrogate him to extract some useful information about the demon army's strength and its preparedness, as well as to use him as a bargain tool in case we need to engage in some sort of negotiation in the due course.]¹ (7)

[Note—¹In Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka/Yuddha Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 7-8, we read that Sugriv has suggested a similar thing to Lord Ram. Militarily it was a prudent advice because by letting an enemy's brother inside the camp may prove very dangerous for Lord Ram's army as it would be made vulnerable to spying from within. All the chinks in the defense lines of Lord Ram's army, all its shortcomings and strengths, all its preparedness and war strategies would be susceptible to leakage as they would be known to Vibhishan once he is allowed to join the camp, and it will

then be so much the easier for Ravana to out-manuever the Lord's army and strike from the behind. Hence, it was a dangerous proposition to allow Vibhishan to join the monkey army, because if he has come with the intention of espionage then this situation would be like digging one's own grave.

But as we shall read in the following verses, Lord Ram had other plans in his mind. The Lord asserts that though what Sugriv suggests is prudent, practical and wise militarily, but he has his own reputation to maintain and vows to keep, which makes it obligatory upon the Lord not to turn back anyone who is distressed and has come to seek the Lord's protection, to surrender to the Lord and seek his refuge and blessings, in which case the Lord must grant that person's wishes and make him fearless from torments that had motivated him to come seeking the Lord's refuge and protection. Besides this, if Vibhishan happens to be the Lord's devotee, which indeed he was, then the case is made all the more stronger in his favour, and there is no reason why Vibhishan should not be warmly welcomed.]

सखा नीति तुम्ह नीकि बिचारी । मम पन सरनागत भयहारी ॥ ८ ॥
सुनि प्रभु बचन हरष हनुमाना । सरनागत बच्छल भगवाना ॥ ९ ॥

sakhā nīti tumha nīki bicārī. mama pana saranāgata bhayahārī. 8.
suni prabhu bacana haraṣa hanumānā. saranāgata bacchala bhagavānā. 9.

Lord Ram replied to Sugriv, 'My friend (sakhā)! What you said is truly wise, but I am committed to protect anyone who comes humbly to surrender himself before me and seek shelter at my feet.

[To wit, I agree with your contention that the visitor being a demon no one can correctly predict what he has in his mind. But I have made a vow that whosoever comes to me in distress, seeking my help and protection, I will not turn him away. It's a reputation that I must uphold.]¹ (8)

When Hanuman heard the words of Lord Ram he felt exhilarated in his heart, because now it was evident that the Lord was truly the one who loves those who come to seek shelter with him and surrender themselves at his feet². (9)

[Note—¹When Sugriv expressed his grave reservations in accepting Vibhishan, an enemy's brother, as a member of Lord Ram's group as it is a dangerous thing to do from military point of view because this person may be an enemy's spy pretending to be the Lord's devotee, the Lord assuaged his fears and said—"Friend, you have given me an advice which is wise and prudent (from strategic, defense and military point of view). But I have taken a vow to remove the fears of those who have come to seek shelter in my feet."

Lord Ram makes two observations here. One is that he addresses Sugriv as his 'friend', and the other is that he says 'that Sugriv has given a wise advice'. Well, a good friend is indeed one who gives a wise advice that is to the best of his intelligence and thinking. To accept an enemy's brother as a member of the army is never advisable—and so Sugriv made it clear that he does not agree with the view of accepting Vibhishan in their midst. Lord Ram acknowledged this fact by addressing Sugriv as his 'friend'.

But then Lord Ram is not an ordinary prince who is driven merely by worldly considerations; he is the Supreme Lord of creation in a personified form, and therefore has many things to consider before taking any decision. Militarily and from strategic defense point of view what Sugriv suggested was very wise and prudent—that it is not advisable to keep an enemy's brother amongst them. But the Lord is supposed to be giver of protection to all those who are distressed in this world, and therefore he is bound to take this factor into consideration before deciding whether or not to accept Vibhishan as a refugee. Hence the Lord declared that 'he is determined to remove the 'fear of those who come to seek shelter with him'.

When we examine the situation on the ground we find that there are two armies having a stand-off, one is that of Ravana of Lanka, the demon kingdom, and the other is that of Lord Ram and his companion Sugriv of the monkey kingdom. In this situation if Vibhishan has come to seek refuge with the Lord then obviously there is something very serious that has compelled him to take this drastic step, as it is extremely dangerous to become a traitor and go openly to join an enemy's camp prior to a war. Vibhishan will be summarily tried for treason, hounded by his all-powerful demon brother Ravana, hunted down, tortured and killed instantly if the Lord now refused him permission to remain with him. Vibhishan has taken an extremely risky step, and above all he is the Lord's devotee. So there was no question of denying him refuge.

Vibhishan was humiliated and kicked out by Ravana because he was giving him sane and rational advice that was in accordance to the principles of common sense, ethics and probity—that one should not kidnap someone's loyal wife, and then unnecessarily get entangled in a bloody and ruinous war for the sake of a single woman. After being sternly rebuked by Ravana and declared as a virtual traitor for advocating the cause of Ravana's enemy, i.e. Lord Ram, it was clearly suicidal for Vibhishan to remain within Lanka for one moment more. He had no other option but to escape before it was too late. He was scared for his life, and if the Lord now refused him protection it would be against the declared principle of the Lord and would undermine the Lord's glorious virtue that he is a merciful and benevolent protector of refugees, and he cheerfully accepts anyone who comes to seek genuine refuge in his holy feet no matter what the sins of the other person are.

Lord Ram is the King of Ayodhya from the temporal perspective, and the Supreme Lord Emperor of the whole world from the perspective of creation. Each action of his will become a law, a precedent and an example that would be followed by others in the world. Thus, from now onwards it would become an established principle of statehood that a king is obliged to grant refuge to refugees if they are distressed, terrified and fear for their lives, and have come seeking asylum with the king. Of course it is now obligatory on the part of the refuge-seeker to be loyal and faithful to the person who has granted him refuge and protection, and any betrayal will be a horrendous sin more intense than treason.

To the credit of Vibhishan, he lived faithful and loyal to Lord Ram for the rest of his life.

²Hanuman could not counter Sugriv as he was the king of the monkeys as well as the commander-in-chief of the army, but internally Hanuman did not like the idea of turning Vibhishan away as he had personally known the latter to be a great devotee of the Lord and the one who had been of a lot of help in showing where Sita was confined in Lanka when Hanuman had gone there in search for her—refer: Ram

Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6, till Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 8.

Besides this, refusal to accept Vibhishan as a refugee would harm Lord Ram's reputation as the most compassionate and merciful Lord of creation who extends protection to all those who are his devotees and are in distress, and it would also put Hanuman in a bad light and make him out to be a liar because he had lauded the excellent virtues of the Lord when he met Vibhishan in Lanka (apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 7—to Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 8), and if Vibhishan is not accepted and warmly welcomed now then all his assertions about the good nature of Lord Ram would be nothing but mere bluff and bluster.

Therefore, when the Lord declared that he will accept Vibhishan inspite of everything else, it was Hanuman who felt the most happy of the lot.]

दो०. सरनागत कहूँ जे तजहिं निज अनहित अनुमानि ।
ते नर पावँर पापमय तिन्हहि बिलोकत हानि ॥ ४३ ॥

dōhā.

saranāgata kahum̐ jē tajahim̐ nija anahita anumāni.
tē nara pāvam̐ra pāpamaya tinhahi bilōkata hāni. 43.

Lord Ram declared—‘He who refuses to give shelter to someone who comes seeking it in great distress, apprehending some harm from him, is a very sinful and despicable man. It is abominable and revulsive to even look at such an immoral person. (Doha no. 43)

[Note—The implication of this edict of the Lord is that those who accept refugees irrespective of all other considerations are righteous men, and it is a lawful duty not to turn away someone who has surrendered himself, is in grave distress, and has come seeking unequivocal protection.

When someone comes to another person seeking protection it implies that the former is sure that the latter is able and strong enough to protect him. If it is within the means of the second person then he must never refuse the first person protection, as this will be tantamount to betrayal of trust and faith that the refuge-seeker has in the person to whom he has come seeking shelter. This will also not be good thing from the view of the reputation of the stronger person; it will give the signal that he is selfish and biased.

Lord Ram signaled to Sugriv that if he refused to accept Vibhishan out of any fear, then he will face such ignominy in this world that he would not be able to show his face to anyone later on, chiefly when the people regard him as an incarnate Supreme Being.]

चौ०. कोटि बिप्र बध लागहिं जाहूँ । आएँ सरन तजउँ नहिं ताहूँ ॥ १ ॥
सनमुख होइ जीव मोहि जबहीं । जन्म कोटि अघ नासहिं तबहीं ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

kōṭi bipra badha lāgahim jāhū. ā'ēm̃ sarana taja'um̃ nahim tāhū. 1.
sanamukha hō'i jīva mōhi jabahim. janma kōṭi agha nāsahim tabahim. 2.

Even if the refuge-seeker is accused of killing countless Vipras (Brahmins), I do not abandon him if he comes sincerely and terrified to seek my refuge, shelter and protection. (1)

[In this verse, the Lord answers the natural question that arises in one's mind—how can the Lord accept someone as sinful as the one who has harmed Brahmins?]

As soon as a Jiva (a creature; a living being) faces me or comes near me, all his sins, faults, corruptions, moral turpitudes and vices that have been accumulated over many countless births are eliminated instantly. (2)

[Note—¹This is said by the Lord to emphasise his determination to accept all those who come to seek the Lord's protection, shelter and refuge. Lord Ram wishes to tell the world that one should not fear harsh treatment and humiliation at his hands just because one is a sinner and has committed some grave error at the time of going to seek shelter with the Lord, as he is ready to pardon him. The fact is that the Lord is extremely merciful and forgiving, and once one surrenders himself before the Lord he has no more to fear from anything. This was the advice given to Ravana by his wife Mandodari on three separate occasions in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand—(i) Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 6, till Doha no. 7; (ii) (i) Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 14, till Doha no. 15; and (iii) Doha no. 35 Kha, till Doha no. 37.

Malyawan, an old and wise demon who was one of the chief advisors of Ravana, also advised him the same thing in Ram Charit Manas, Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48, till Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 49. And finally, Ravana's own brother Vibhishan had advocated the same thing, and had even assured Ravana that he need not have any fear of retribution or vengeance from Lord Ram should he decide to surrender before the Lord as the latter is extremely forgiving and accepting—refer Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 39.

But the irony is that those who are sinful and innately pervert do not desire to go to the Lord in the first place—this has been clearly stated by Lord Ram himself in the following Chaupai line nos. 3-5.

²From the perspective of metaphysics and the Upanishads, the phrase 'the Jiva facing the Supreme Being' means a creature becoming self-realised and enlightened. Such a creature realises that his true 'self' is the pure conscious Atma and not the gross body that is involved in doing so many deeds, sinful or not, and therefore 'he'—the 'truthful identity of the Jiva'—is not to be blamed or accused for the acts and deeds of the body. Hence, no punishment accrues to 'him'—i.e. to his true self, the Atma. This Atma is a microcosmic form of the cosmic Atma known as the Parmatma, the supreme Atma, the super Consciousness.

This super Consciousness, the true 'self' of the Jiva, is like the brilliant sun shining in the sky; no taints can ever tarnish its image. Appearance of clouds may give the impression that the sun's brilliance has faded, but wise ones know that it is not the truth. Similarly, the countless faults and sins of the world are limited to the body, and they have no bearing on the holiness and purity of the Atma, the true self of the Jiva.

This is what the Lord implies here. Once one has witnessed the truth of his inner-self, once one has experienced the brilliance of the consciousness residing in one's inner-self, all worldly taints known as sins and vices fade into oblivion like the cloud that does not affect the brilliance of the sun's disc.

Now, a controversy is raised. How is it possible for great sinners to attain the Lord who is most holy and divine? This is answered in the next line—that a sinner cannot think of having devotion and affection for Lord Ram. To be sinful and be a devotee of the Lord at the same time is an impossible proposition much like day and night existing together. If one comes to the Lord then it is deemed that he has overcome his sins.

Another connotation is that if a person had committed some mistake in the past but now realises that he had done a grave wrong, then he must be given all opportunities to reform himself, as to err is in human nature, and sincere repentance must be given cognizance. The Supreme Being has taken the trouble to come down to earth and himself suffer as a human being because he is merciful and wishes to provide the world a chance at redemption. Had it been that he simply wished to punish and reward all according to their actions and deeds, there was no need to take this trouble, for he could have easily done it sitting in heaven—rewarding the righteous ones with their desired fruits, and condemning to hell the sinful ones. But that is not the wish of the Supreme Father—he loves all his children alike, and if some of them have gone astray he tries his best to give them a chance for reforming themselves and bring them back to the mainstream of righteous way of life known as Dharma.]

पापवंत कर सहज सुभाऊ । भजनु मोर तेहि भाव न काऊ ॥ ३ ॥

जौं पै दुष्टहृदय सोइ होई । मोरें सनमुख आव कि सोई ॥ ४ ॥

निर्मल मन जन सो मोहि पावा । मोहि कपट छल छिद्र न भावा ॥ ५ ॥

pāpavanta kara sahaja subhā'ū. bhajanu mōra tēhi bhāva na kā'ū. 3.

jauṁ pai duṣṭahrdaya sō'i hō'ī. mōrēm sanamukha āva ki sō'ī. 4.

nirmala mana jana sō mōhi pāvā. mōhi kapaṭa chala chidra na bhāvā. 5.

A person who is sinful and pervert, a person who is corrupt and has vices in him, is by nature averse to having devotion for me and worshipping me.

[To wit, persons with a tainted heart and mind cannot even think of worshipping me or having devotion for me—because there darkness and light cannot go together.]¹ (3)

If he (Vibhishan) has any trace of wickedness or deceit in his heart, then can he ever come to me and face me, surely not!

[Lord Ram is making a general statement here. He says that a person with a wicked heart and mind cannot dare to come before the Lord, he cannot even think of facing the Lord. So, in case someone has approached the Lord then it sure that his heart and mind are un-corrupt, or at least ready to mend their way. This is corroborated by the verse below.]² (4)

Only those Jivas (creatures; living beings) who have a purified, uncorrupt and taintless Mana (mind, sub-conscious and heart) can ever expect or hope to attain me or come near me—as I do not like wickedness, vices, deceit, conceit, pretensions,

duplicity and perversions that act like moral cracks, crevices and holes for a person.³
(5)

[Note—¹This is the reason why the Lord will willingly accept anyone who comes seeking refuge and shelter with him. We can understand this by a simple example. The fire has a natural tendency to burn impurities, but it does not burn the pure metal. When impure god is required to be purified, it is put in fire where all the impurities are burnt and pure metal remains.

Similarly, when a Jiva faces the Lord all his sins, vices and perversions, which are like the impurity of the gold, get burnt instantly, and what emerges is the purified Atma which is like pure sample of gold.

²This line is an extension of verse no. 3, and completes the reason given by the Lord for accepting even the sinful ones as his refugees. He goes on to clarify the matter further in the next line no. 5.

³This is a stern warning from Lord Ram. When a person decides to approach the Lord with a petition for surrender and seeking refuge, he must keep this in mind. Lord Ram is all-knowing and omniscient; nothing is hidden from him. No one can cheat him by pretensions and sweet talk. And above all, the Lord is almighty and all-powerful. So there is no joking with him like there is no joking when dealing with a king or emperor. Should the king become annoyed by any remote chance at the petitioner, the latter's fate is too obvious to narrate—he will be at the best thrown in the prison for life if not viciously thrashed instantly and hanged outright.

So we see that after showing his kind side, the Lord now warns cunning people that his gracious nature must not be played fools around with. 'Be warned' he wishes to say; if a wicked man tries to play smart with the Lord, then he had it!]

भेद लेन पठवा दससीसा । तबहुँ न कछु भय हानि कपीसा ॥ ६ ॥

जग महुँ सखा निसाचर जेते । लछिमनु हनइ निमिष महुँ तेते ॥ ७ ॥

जौं सभीत आवा सरनाई । रखिहउँ ताहि प्रान की नाई ॥ ८ ॥

bhēda lēna paṭhavā dasasīsā. tabahum̐ na kachu bhaya hāni kapīsā. 6.

jaga mahum̐ sakhā nisācara jētē. lachimanu hana'i nimiṣa mahum̐ tētē. 7.

jauṁ sabhīta āvā saranā'īm. rakhiha'um̐ tāhi prāna kī nā'īm. 8.

After making his intentions clear, Lord Ram turned to Sugriv and assured him not to fear for anything because of the Lord not accepting his advice to keep Vibhishan in captivity. He reassured Sugriv and said—'Even if the ten-headed Ravana has sent him (Vibhishan) to spy upon us, oh king of monkeys (Sugriv), there is still nothing to fear about at all. [Why? This is answered in the next line no. 7.] (6)

Oh friend! Laxman (Lord Ram's younger brother) is strong and able enough to kill in a short time all the demons who live in this world¹. (7)

On the other hand, if he (Vibhishan) is distressed and has come to seek my shelter out of fear of persecution and punishment, then verily I declare that I will protect him with my life; I will protect him like one protects one's own life². (8)

[Note—¹To wit, even if Vibhishan is a spy and causes sabotage from within our ranks any time in future, something that you fear the most, there is no cause of alarm—because my brother Laxman can single-handedly eliminate all the demons who exist in this world.

Here, Lord Ram is praising Laxman and his valour to send out the signal that he is not alone here to face the enemy, but has a very powerful brother with him. So not only Vibhishan but anyone else amongst the monkey-and-bear army who tries to act smart with them any time during the war should be warned.

Another reason for praising Laxman in public is to give him honour for all the personal sacrifices he has done for the Lord's cause—he left the comfort of the kingdom to accompany Lord Ram to the forest, looked after the Lord and his wife Sita during the course of their long exile period in the forest, and was the Lord's only companion and comrade-in-arm when the Lord was passing through a rough patch in his life. Strategically also it was a clever devise by the Lord—it helped to boost Laxman's morale and standing in the hierarchy of the army; it acknowledged the Lord's faith and reliance upon him. The Lord made it clear that he was the second-in-command.

Lord Ram wished to express his solidarity with his younger brother and thank him for his seminal courage and exemplary loyalty. It would not look good if he had directly praised Laxman in private, so the Lord took the indirect method of praising Laxman's abilities as an able and invincible warrior in public while he was also present to hear the praise.

It ought to be noted that this statement by Lord Ram must not be construed as boastful and bombastic because one may argue that if what Lord Ram asserts is the true case then why couldn't Laxman alone defeat the demon army, and why he was wounded in the battle-field? Well, the answer is that not only did Lord Ram wish to praise his comrade-in-arm and a faithful companion who had been at his side through thick and thin but he also wished to boost the morale of the monkey army that they have a powerful commander to lead them.

In sage Veda Vyas' Adhyatma Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 3, verse nos. 10-11, Lord Ram expresses almost similar views, but with a little difference. He says here that should Vibhishan play any dirty tricks against them then he is capable of taking care of him all by himself, as he is that Supreme Lord of the world who can annihilate the entire creation if he so wishes. Compare this to our present chaupai line no. 7 in Ram Charit Manas where Lord Ram points to his younger brother and says Laxman can take care of the eventuality of Vibhishan betraying them because he (Laxman) is capable of killing all the demon forces single-handedly if the situation so demands.

²Lord Ram has placed on the table both the options to make Sugriv overcome his fears. One is that if Vibhishan has come to spy upon them, no harm will be caused—because if he tries to create mischief, then Laxman is competent to take care of him by killing him instantly. The other option is that if he is terrified and has come to seek genuine refuge, then the Lord is duty-bound and obliged to give him full protection.

So under both the circumstances, Sugriv must bring Vibhishan before the Lord without any sort of fear or reservations.]

दो०. उभय भान्ति तेहि आनहु हँसि कह कृपानिकेत ।

जय कृपाल कहि कपि चले अंगद हनू समेत ॥ ४४ ॥

dōhā.

ubhaya bhām̐ti tēhi ānahu ham̐si kaha kṛpānikēta.
jaya kṛpāla kahi kapi calē aṅgada hanū samēta. 44.

The merciful Lord smiled and ordered—‘So, bring him to me under both the circumstances. [To wit, whether he is come as a friend or as a foe, there is nothing to worry at all. Bring him to me and then we shall see.]¹’

The monkeys applauded the Lord and exclaimed happily in unison, ‘Glory to the merciful Lord’. Then accompanied by Hanuman, they went to bring him (Vibhishan) to the Lord. (Doha no. 44)

[Note—¹Vibhishan came seeking refuge in the holy feet of Lord Ram. Sugriv, who was the commanders of the Lord’s army and the chief of the monkeys, had serious doubts about his intentions. He felt that Vibhishan should be tied and held as captive—refer: Chaupai line nos. 4-7 that precede Doha no. 43.

Lord Ram then assured them that they have nothing to fear, and that the Lord will accept Vibhishan in all circumstances as it is a principle of Dharma (morality and righteous conduct) on the part of the Lord not to refuse a request from a distressed person seeking refuge in his holy feet.

Essentially the Lord says that he is determined to accept anyone who is truly distressed and comes to seek sincere refuge and protection from the Lord without having any kind of deceit, pretensions and falsehood in his heart. To refuse permission to such a person, to deny refuge to a person who has come to surrender himself before the Lord is an unthinkable thing for the Lord as he is renowned to be the provider of refuge to the helpless and the hapless, to the distressed and the miserable, to those who have no other succour and solace in this world except the Lord himself.

One very important reason why Lord Ram was sure that Vibhishan had no ill intentions is this: When Hanuman came back from his successful mission to Lanka and briefed the Lord about the details of his adventures, he must have surely told him about his brief meeting with Vibhishan, and how the latter had helped him on two occasions—one by telling him where to find Sita, and on the second occasion by protecting his life when he prevailed upon the mad demons, who were bent on attacking and killing Hanuman in the court of Ravana, to spare his life and instead humiliate him by branding any part of his body, at which they wrapped cloth around his tail and set it on fire. This obviously hinted to the Lord that Vibhishan was favourably inclined towards him.]

चौ०. सादर तेहि आगें करि बानर । चले जहाँ रघुपति करुनाकर ॥ १ ॥

दूरिहि ते देखे द्वौ भ्राता । नयनानंद दान के दाता ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sādara tēhi āgēm kari bānara. calē jahām̐ raghupati karunākara. 1.

dūrihi tē dēkhē dvau bhrātā. nayanānanda dāna kē dātā. 2.

[The messengers went quickly to where they had kept Vibhishan waiting on the outskirts of the camp. They informed him that Lord Ram has instructed that he be respectfully brought in his presence. So they invited Vibhishan to accompany them to the place where the Lord was waiting to receive him.]

Keeping him (Vibhishan) very respectfully ahead of themselves, the troop of monkeys proceeded to the place where Lord Raghupati (Sri Ram), the Lord who is all-merciful and compassionate, was waiting for them to return. (1)

He (Vibhishan) saw the two brothers (Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman) from a distance. Their sight was universally so magnificent and singular in its majesty and beauty that it granted immense joy to the eyes of the beholder as if it was a largesse given out by the two brothers for free to all those who come to visit them¹. (2)

[Note—¹This was the first time in his life that Vibhishan was seeing the two brothers, and he was overwhelmed by the magnificence and beauty of the sight. For a few moments he stood mesmerized, losing all awareness of himself and his surroundings. He had heard that the Lord was beautiful to behold, but he had never imagined ‘how’ great that beauty was. And there is nothing unusual or wondrous about it, for Lord Ram was a personified form of the Supreme Being whose other visible form is Mother Nature; and who does not know how beautiful, how amazing, how magnificent and how majestic is Nature!]

बहुरि राम छबिधाम बिलोकी । रहेउ ठटुकि एकटक पल रोकी ॥ ३ ॥
 भुज प्रलंब कंजारुन लोचन । स्यामल गात प्रनत भय मोचन ॥ ४ ॥
 सिंघ कंध आयत उर सोहा । आनन अमित मदन मन मोहा ॥ ५ ॥

bahuri rāma chabidhāma bilōkī. rahē'u ṭhaṭuki ēkaṭaka pala rōkī. 3.
 bhuja pralamba kaṇjārūna lōcana. syāmala gāta pranata bhaya mōcana. 4.
 siṅgha kandha āyata ura sōhā. ānana amita madana mana mōhā. 5.

After the initial amazement that the combined beautiful view of the two brothers had caused to Vibhishan, he turned his attention especially to Lord Ram whom he had come to meet.

The sight of the Lord was singularly unique in its charm and beauty so much so that when Vibhishan focused his attention on the Lord he was so overwhelmed for some time that he stood motionless as if in a daze; he could neither blink his eyes nor could he move his legs. (3)

The Lord's arms were long (implying that his reach was far and wide); his eyes were like red-hued lotus flowers (indicating that they were beautiful and his sight was pure as the lotus); and his body had a dark complexion (like that of the ocean or the sky, indicating that the Lord had no end).

This form of the Lord removed or destroyed the fears of all those who came to surrender themselves before him (pranata bhaya mōcana). [It is because this form

of Lord Ram represented the Supreme Being who is the almighty Lord of the world.] (4)

The Lord's shoulders were muscular and broad like that of a lion (indicating that the Lord was strong enough to extend his support and protection to his dependants and followers); and his chest (bosom) was wide (indicating that the Lord had a 'large, magnanimous, benevolent heart' that welcomed everyone; that he cheerfully embraced one and all). (5)

नयन नीर पुलकित अति गाता । मन धरि धीर कही मृदु बाता ॥ ६ ॥
नाथ दसानन कर मैं भ्राता । निसिचर बंस जनम सुरत्राता ॥ ७ ॥
सहज पापप्रिय तामस देहा । जथा उलूकहि तम पर नेहा ॥ ८ ॥

nayana nīra pulakita ati gātā. mana dhari dhīra kahī mṛdu bātā. 6.
nātha dasānana kara mair̥ṁ bhrātā. nīsicara bansa janama suratrātā. 7.
sahaja pāpapiya tāmasa dēhā. jathā ulūkahi tama para nēhā. 8.

Vibhishan had become highly emotional at the bewitching sight of Lord Ram; his eyes were filled with tears and his body was thrilled. He, however, soon recovered himself and gathered his wits together, and addressed Lord Ram with sweet and polite words --- (6)

[Vibhishan said to Lord Ram—] 'Oh Lord (nātha)! I am a brother of the ten-headed Ravana. Oh the Lord who is a protector of the gods (suratrātā)! I am born in the demon race (which, on the other hand, has been always tormenting the gods)¹. (7)

I have an evil body (of a demon) which is inclined to be naturally sinful (i.e. being a demon by birth it is my nature to be sinful), just like an owl that has a natural affinity for darkness of the night.² (8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan means that while Lord Ram is a protector of the gods, he himself is born in the demon race that has traditionally been tormenting the gods.

²Why is Vibhishan outlining all his negative-ness before Lord Ram while introducing himself? He wishes to convey to the Lord that he is humble and unpretentious as he fully understands his background. He is not pretending to be a nice demon who qualifies to be accepted by Lord Ram as a righteous person who deserves respect. But inspite of all the shortcomings and drawbacks he has inherited by the virtue of his birth, over which he had no control, he nevertheless has come to surrender before the Lord as he had heard about the Lord's greatness and reputation that he gladly welcomes everyone if they are honest and sincere, irrespective of their backgrounds. This is clear in the following Doha no. 45.

Vibhishan decided that it would be absolutely wrong to try to act smart with Lord Ram, and it would be better to point out his negative aspects first and foremost so that when the Lord accepts him in his camp no one would accuse him that he had misled the Lord about himself by not divulging the truth. He wanted to be accepted by Lord Ram the way he was, whether he was bad or good, and not in a way that was

artificial and made-up. Relationship that is based on truth and honesty would be lasting and strong for both the parties, for Lord Ram as well as Vibhishan. They would be able to trust each other better when they know that neither of them will speak falsehood to impress the other.]

दो०. श्रवन सुजसु सुनि आयउँ प्रभु भंजन भव भीर ।
त्राहि त्राहि आरति हरन सरन सुखद रघुबीर ॥ ४५ ॥
dōhā.

śravana sujasu suni āya'um̐ prabhu bhañjana bhava bhīra.
trāhi trāhi āraṭi harana sarana sukhada raghubīra. 45.

I have come to seek refuge with you after having heard about your great reputation and goodwill that you are an able Lord who can eliminate or destroy the fears arising from the great horrors of this gross mundane world, which is like a vast intractable ocean of endless grief, miseries and torments (prabhu bhañjana bhava bhīra).

Oh Lord Raghubir (Lord Ram)! You remove the suffering of those who have surrendered themselves unconditionally at your holy feet (āraṭi harana). I repeatedly beseech and beg of you to protect me and save me (trāhi trāhi) by granting me a place at your feet as it would give me a lot of peace, comfort and happiness (sarana sukhada).’ (Doha no. 45)

चौ०. अस कहि करत दंडवत देखा । तुरत उठे प्रभु हरष बिसेषा ॥ १ ॥
दीन बचन सुनि प्रभु मन भावा । भुज बिसाल गहि हृदयँ लगावा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

asa kahi karata daṇḍavata dēkhā. turata uṭhē prabhu haraṣa bisēṣā. 1.
dīna bacana suni prabhu mana bhāvā. bhuja bisāla gahi hṛdayam̐ lagāvā. 2.

Saying so, Vibhishan prostrated himself reverentially before Lord Ram. When the Lord observed that Vibhishan has fallen at his feet, he got up immediately with cheer in his heart. (10)

Vibhishan’s words of humility impressed Lord Ram’s compassionate heart a lot. So the Lord instantly got up and extended his long arms to lift Vibhishan from the ground, and then he affectionately embraced him tightly to his bosom. (2)

अनुज सहित मिलि ढिग बैठारी । बोले बचन भगत भयहारी ॥ ३ ॥
कहु लंकेस सहित परिवारा । कुसल कुठाहर बास तुम्हारा ॥ ४ ॥

anuja sahita mili ḍhiga baiṭhārī. bōlē bacana bhagata bhayahārī. 3.
kahu laṅkēsa sahita parivārā. kusala kuṭhāhara bāsa tumhārā. 4.

Both Lord Ram and his younger brother Laxman met Vibhishan very affectionately. Then making Vibhishan sit near him, the Lord said polite and reassuring words that remove all fears of his devotees¹. (3)

Lord Ram addressed Vibhishan affectionately and asked of his welfare, saying, ‘Oh the king of Lanka (laṅkāsa)²! Tell me about your welfare along with that of your family. Indeed it is unfortunate that you reside at a place (a reference to Lanka) which is very inhospitable for you. (4)

[Note—¹Vibhishan was very scared and in a dire state; his condition was very precarious. On one side his own brother had become his arch enemy and would kill him if he went back to Lanka; on the other side he was in an enemy camp and uncertain how he would be treated by their king, in this case Lord Ram. He was nervous and terrified. So when Lord Ram and Laxman met him affectionately and welcomed him, and then the Lord made him sit next to him, speaking to him politely, Vibhishan felt he has got a new lease of life. Those few moments must have been very nerve-wrecking and torturing for Vibhishan; and the warmth of Lord Ram’s reception immediately lifted the veil of gloom that had engulfed him from all sides.

Although Vibhishan was sure that he would not be turned away, yet he was not expecting the warmth by which he was welcomed by Lord Ram and Laxman. So he was overcome with intense gratitude, and vowed to himself that as long as he lived he will not forget that he owed his life and honour to Lord Ram. The allegiance to Lord Ram that sprouted thus in Vibhishan’s heart at that time was profound, natural and honest and spontaneous.

²By addressing Vibhishan as “laṅkāsa”, the ‘king of Lanka’, Lord Ram has predicted the future—that one day Vibhishan would actually be the ruler of the kingdom of Lanka. This epithet was meant to tell Vibhishan that the Lord would treat him with the same respect that he would show to another king, that Lord Ram would not humiliate him or show disrespect to him before his courtiers, and that the Lord would treat him as an equal. This attitude of the Lord had a profound emotional and psychological effect on Vibhishan; he immediately became loyal and faithful towards Lord Ram.

He compared the Lord’s loving behavior towards him with that of his own brother Ravana who treated him with utter scorn, disdain and contempt, and the gulf was too evidently deep and wide for him. Mentally Vibhishan became a virtual ‘slave’ of Lord Ram as he found in the Lord someone who was more loving and caring than his own father. Truly, what would a person, who has lost all hopes of succour and solace, who stares at a bleak future of doom and misery, want more?]

खल मंडलीं बसहु दिनु राती । सखा धरम निबहइ केहि भाँती ॥ ५ ॥
मैं जानउँ तुम्हारि सब रीती । अति नय निपुन न भाव अनीती ॥ ६ ॥

khala maṇḍalīm basahu dinu rātī. sakhā dharama nibaha'i kēhi bhāmṭī. 5.
mair̥ jāna'um̐ tumhāri saba rītī. ati naya nipuna na bhāva anītī. 6.

You live surrounded day and night by a vicious and wicked company (of demons at Lanka). In this situation I wonder how you manage to keep your piety and good conduct. (5)

I am amazed because I am aware that you are righteous by your very nature, that you do not like anything that is improper and wrong. [So I wonder how you manage to live and uphold your principles in the midst of the demons who are inherently opposed to the way of life you are accustomed to.]¹ (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram’s assertion that he knows that Vibhishan is pious and righteous by nature is in answer to what Vibhishan had said earlier—that he was sinful, a demon, etc. (apropos: Chaupai line nos. 7-8 that precedes Doha no. 45 herein above).

Lord Ram wishes to reassure Vibhishan that he need not fear anything from the Lord, because the Lord knows everything about him. If the Lord can welcome even a sinful creature, then how much the better it is if that creature is pious and righteous?]

बरु भल बास नरक कर ताता । दुष्ट संग जनि देइ बिधाता ॥ ७ ॥

अब पद देखि कुसल रघुराया । जौं तुम्ह कीन्ह जानि जन दाया ॥ ८ ॥

baru bhala bāsa naraka kara tātā. duṣṭa saṅga jani dē'i bidhātā. 7.
aba pada dēkhi kusala raghurāyā. jaur̥m tumha kīnhi jāni jana dāyā. 8.

Oh my dear (tātā)! It is better to live in hell, but let the Creator not let anyone live amongst wicked people (as it causes more torment, misery and grief than what is experienced in hell).’ (7)

Vibhishan replied, ‘Oh Lord of the Raghus (“raghurāyā”; Lord Ram)! Now that I have had an opportunity to see your holy feet, and have been fortunate enough that you have decided to show mercy to me and accept me as one of your servants (or as your subordinate, follower and devotee), everything has turned auspicious and fortunate for me.’ (8)

दो०. तब लगि कुसल न जीव कहूँ सपनेहुँ मन बिश्राम ।

जब लगि भजत न राम कहूँ सोक धाम तजि काम ॥ ४६ ॥

dōhā.

taba lagi kusala na jīva kahum̐ sapanēhum̐ mana biśrāma.
jaba lagi bhajata na rāma kahum̐ sōka dhāma taji kāma. 46.

[Vibhishan said—] ‘Verily indeed, a creature cannot expect even in his dreams to have an auspicious future nor can his mind and heart ever find peace and rest until the time he abandons all worldly desires and passions, that are harbingers of grief, misery and pain, and devote himself instead to worshipping Lord Ram.

[To wit, a living being cannot expect, even in his dream, to have any kind of peace and happiness in his mind or heart, or expect to have any kind of welfare or

good for himself, till the time he does not do Bhajan of Lord Ram, i.e. till the time he does not remember the Lord with great love and devotion, after having distanced himself from all worldly attachments and desires which are nothing but a treasury of sorrows and miseries for him.]’ (Doha no. 46)

चौ०. तब लगि हृदयँ बसत खल नाना । लोभ मोह मच्छर मद माना ॥ १ ॥
जब लगि उर न बसत रघुनाथा । धरें चाप सायक कटि भाथा ॥ २ ॥
caupāī.

taba lagi hr̥dayam̐ basata khala nānā. lōbha mōha macchara mada mānā. 1.
jaba lagi ura na basata raghunāthā. dharēm cāpa sāyaka kaṭi bhāthā. 2.

[Vibhishan continued with his submission. He said—] ‘The various kinds of negative traits that make a creature wicked and vile—such as ‘Lobha’ (greed, avarice, rapacity), ‘Moha’ (delusions, attachments, attractions), ‘Matsar’ (jealousy, envy and ill-will), ‘Mada’ (arrogance, haughtiness, ego, vanity etc.) et al— [1] live in the creature’s heart only till the time Lord Ram, who holds a bow and arrow in his hands, does not live there [2]¹. (1-2)

[Note—¹Wicked miscreants can enter and live inside a person’s home only if there is no one to guard it against them. These wicked people, once they find entry inside the house, would ruin the house as well as its owner, imparting their bad habits on the occupants of the house and giving the whole family a bad name in the neighbourhood. But if the owner is wise and prudent, he will appoint an armed guard to protect his home from such miscreants.

In the present verse, such an armed guard is Lord Ram, and he is armed with a bow and arrow to protect his devotee from the evil-doings of miscreants represented by such negative traits as Lobha, Moha, Matsar, Mada etc. With the presence of Lord Ram in the heart of the devotee, these miscreants would not dare to peep inside.

It is significant to note that the Lord is shown as holding the bow and arrow here—it signifies the Lord’s readiness to destroy these negativities from the heart of his true devotees.]

ममता तरुन तमी अँधिआरी । राग द्वेष उलूक सुखकारी ॥ ३ ॥
तब लगि बसति जीव मन माहीं । जब लगि प्रभु प्रताप रबि नाही ॥ ४ ॥

mamatā taruna tamī aṁdhi'ārī. rāga dvēṣa ulūka sukhakārī. 3.
taba lagi basati jīva mana māhīm. jaba lagi prabhu pratāpa rabi nāhīm. 4.

Similarly, ‘Mamta’ (infatuation; passion and affection for material world) is like a dark night which is very pleasing for the owls represented by the two opposing emotions of ‘Raag and Dwesh’ (attachment for something and repulsion with another). (3)

These negativities (Raag and Dwesh) reside in the heart of a living being only till the time there is darkness (Mamta) in it, but as soon as the light of the sun symbolized by

the awareness of the splendorous glory and holiness of Lord Ram dawns in a person's inner being, the darkness vanishes and these owls hide themselves. (4)

[Note—Infatuation and lust for a thing create a longing for it; a person becomes blind in its pursuit. This in its wake creates biases in favour of certain entities and against other entities. For instance, if a man is attached to his money (i.e. has 'Mamta' for money), then anyone who helps him increase it would be his greatest friend, and the man begins to love such persons (i.e. develops 'Raag' for him), even if those persons have vested selfish interests in helping him acquire more and more money. On the other hand, if someone becomes a hindrance in his pursuit of money, he becomes his enemy, he becomes jealous of such a person (i.e. he develops 'Dwesh' with him) inspite of his being the man's well-wisher and helping him in many other ways.

But if a man is wise and develops devotion and affection for Lord Ram, he is able to rid himself of such selfish and capricious nature; he becomes steady in his mind, because now he has the Lord to support and guide him, because the Lord becomes his best well-wisher and friend, and because worldly attachments do not matter to him any longer.]

अब मैं कुसल मिटे भय भारे । देखि राम पद कमल तुम्हारे ॥ ५ ॥

तुम्ह कृपाल जा पर अनुकूला । ताहि न व्याप त्रिबिध भव सूला ॥ ६ ॥

aba mair̥ kusala miṭē bhaya bhārē. dēkhi rāma pada kamala tumhārē. 5.
tumha kṛpāla jā para anukūlā. tāhi na byāpa tribidha bhava sūlā. 6.

Oh Lord, now that I have had the opportunity and the privilege of having a divine sight of your holy feet, all of my greatest of fears have been dispelled, and I am feeling absolutely blessed with all sorts of welfare and well-being. (5)

When you become kind and show your grace upon someone, none of the three types of horrible torments of the world can affect him¹. So therefore, I am free from all fears. (6)

[Note—¹The three torments are the following—(i) Daivik—that related to malignant gods and stars, (ii) Daihik—that related to the body, such as old age related problems and so many diseases, and (iii) Bhautik—that related to the existential problems in this world, or problems created by other creatures.]

मैं निसिचर अति अधम सुभाऊ । सुभ आचरनु कीन्ह नहिं काऊ ॥ ७ ॥

जासु रूप मुनि ध्यान न आवा । तेहिं प्रभु हरषि हृदयँ मोहि लावा ॥ ८ ॥

mair̥ nisicara ati adhama subhā'ū. subha ācaranu kīnha nahir̥m kā'ū. 7.
jāsu rūpa muni dhyāna na āvā. tēhir̥m prabhu haraṣi hṛdayam̃ mōhi lāvā. 8.

I am born as a demon who inherently have a very lowly character and sinful nature. As such I cannot claim to ever have done anything that can be said to be truly meritorious. (7)

How exceptionally fortunate and lucky I am therefore that the Lord—whose divine vision is virtually inaccessible for even the great sages and ascetics who make diligent effort to have it during their meditation sessions—has been so kind and graceful that he has embraced and clasped me to his bosom most affectionately! (8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan has clearly indicated here that he knows that Lord Ram is not a human being when he refers to the great sages and ascetics meditating on the Lord's form. These sages and ascetics meditate upon the cosmic form of the Supreme Being known as Brahm, and it is the same Brahm who has manifested himself as Lord Ram.

Realising this, Vibhishan is overwhelmed with gratitude and devotion for Lord Ram.]

दो०. अहोभाग्य मम अमित अति राम कृपा सुख पुंज ।
देखेउँ नयन बिरंचि सिव सेव्य जुगल पद कंज ॥ ४७ ॥

dōhā.

ahōbhāgya mama amita ati rāma kṛpā sukha puñja.
dēkhē'um' nayana biran̄ci siva sēbya jugala pada kan̄ja. 47.

Oh Lord Ram! I am indeed exceptionally fortunate and cannot imagine the greatness of my luck that today I have been meet the Lord who is a fountainhead of mercy, grace, kindness and compassion, and see his holy lotus-like feet that are served, adored and worshipped by the creator Brahma, as well as by Lord Shiva, the concluder of creation. (Doha no. 47)

चौ०. सुनहु सखा निज कहउँ सुभाऊ । जान भुसुंड़ि संभु गिरिजाऊ ॥ १ ॥
जौं नर होइ चराचर द्रोही । आवै सभय सरन तकि मोही ॥ २ ॥
तजि मद मोह कपट छल नाना । करउँ सद्य तेहि साधु समाना ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

sunahu sakhā nija kaha'um' subhā'ū. jāna bhusuṇḍi sambhu girijā'ū. 1.
jauṁ nara hō'i carācara drōhī. āvai sabhaya sarana taki mōhī. 2.
taji mada mōha kapaṭa chala nānā. kara'um' sadya tēhi sādhu samānā. 3.

[When Vibhishan has bowed his head at the holy feet of Lord Ram and expressed his earnest desire to take his refuge, the Lord welcomed him and assured Vibhishan of his total acceptance. It was then the Lord gave him the reason for accepting him without reservations. It acts a welcome invitation to all the creatures to come to the Lord who is waiting for them with an open arm to give them freedom from all their miseries, torments, vexations, fears and consternations.]

Lord Ram told Vibhishan—‘Listen friend! I will tell you my innate nature and temperament. It is well-known to Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, Lord Shiva (Shambu) and Girija (Uma or Parvati, the divine Mother and the holy consort of Shiva)¹. (1)

Even if a person is considered inimical towards the whole world which consists of animate creatures as well as inanimate things, even if he has created animosity all around himself, but still if, stricken with terror and overcome with mortal fear, comes to me to seek refuge in my holy feet [2] after having abandoned or discarding all Mada (ego, pride, arrogance and haughtiness), Moha (delusions, attractions, infatuations and attachments), Kapat and Chal (deceit, conceit, pretensions, wickedness, trickery)—then I verily say I transform him into a saintly figure [3]². (2-3)

[Note—¹It is to be noted here that the Lord has addressed Vibhishan with the word ‘friend’. He had addressed Sugriv with the same word when the two met at the Rishyamook mountain. The glorious virtues of a true friend has already been extolled by the Lord in Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-9 that precede Doha no. 7 when he met Sugriv.

The Lord now reiterates his stand and assures Vibhishan that once the latter has come to surrender himself before the Lord with a sincere heart, he need not worry or fear from anything any more as it has now become the Lord’s responsibility to ensure his welfare and safety.

We will read in the Lord’s final statement in line no. 8 that he compares Vibhishan with a ‘saint’ and says that ‘saints like you are very dear to me’. Therefore we may also deduce that ‘saints’ and ‘friends’ are equally dear to Lord Ram, that all saints are friends of Lord Ram whether they are openly declared so or not, that the auspicious, the righteous, the holy and the glorious characters of all saints make them endeared to the Lord as if they were all his friends, and therefore all of them can be assured of the Lord’s unstinted support, protection, care and reciprocal affection even if they expressly request for such blessing from the Lord or not. It also simply means that all saintly people are friends of the Lord, and therefore the Lord is duty-bound to protect and look for their welfare according to his own self-declared policy.

In his worldly play, the Supreme Being had addressed three persons as his friend—(i) one was Nishad, the chief of the boatman community—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 88; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 94; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 151; Ayodhya Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 193 etc., (ii) the second is Sugriv, the chief of the monkey race—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chaupai line nos. 10, 23 that precede Doha no. 7; Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 43 etc.; and (iii) the third is Vibhishan, the brother of the demon king Ravana—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 48; Lanka Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 80; Lanka Kand, Doha no. 116 Kha etc.

Lord Ram has cited three persons here who know his nature in right earnest—they are Kaagbhusund, Lord Shiva and Parvati.

(a) Kaagbhusund was well-steeped in devotion for Lord Ram and his spiritual enlightenment and level of wisdom was of such a high standard that Lord Shiva had selected him to preach Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu, when the latter wished to learn about the true nature of Lord Ram—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-8 that precede Doha no. 85.

The entire episode is narrated in full as the second half of Uttar Kand of Ram Charit Manas, extending from Doha no.54 right upto to the end of the holy book in Doha no. 125.

(b) Lord Shiva is the main narrator of this divine and holy story of Lord Ram; it was conceived in his heart and mind when he was meditating upon the holy form and name of Lord Ram. Shiva had revealed it first to his divine consort Parvati or Uma, and therefore, like Kaagbhusund, she was the only one who had a first hand knowledge of this divine story and its secrets. It was on her request that Shiva had told this story in the first instance. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Baal Kand, Chaupai line nos. 3-4 that precede Doha no. 30; Uttar Kand, from Doha no. 127, till Doha no. 129.

Tulsidas has clearly said that the story he is narrating is none of his own creation; it is the same story that was narrated by Lord Shiva to Parvati—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precedes Doha no. 130.

²It must be noted that the Lord first converts him into a ‘saintly figure’ before accepting him. Or we can say that as soon as the person coming to seek Lord’s grace has this thought in his mind that he will go and surrender before the Lord by throwing off his dirty cloak symbolised by these negative traits as Mada, Moha, Kapat and Chal, he has automatically converted himself into a saintly person—which implies that his Atma, his ‘true self’ has shed its baggage of worldly taints and emerged fresh and cleaned in its original form. It is this pristine form of the Jiva, the living being, which is eligible to attain the Lord. This process of conversion from a tainted Jiva to a holy and saintly Jiva is as automatic and natural as the chasing away of the darkness of night with the arrival of dawn.

When we read elsewhere in the preaching of Lord Ram in relation with the virtues of saints we find that the taints that are listed here in line no. 3 are the first signs that are to be eliminated from the mental horizon of anyone if he ever hopes to be classified as a saint and pious person.

Earlier, Vibhishan had unilaterally declared this virtue of Lord Ram, that the Lord does not turn away even if a person is so sinful as to have made the whole world his enemy due to his misdeeds, when he was advising his brother Ravana to surrender before the Lord, return Sita to him and avoid unnecessary confrontation with the Lord—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-8 that precede Doha no. 39.]

जननी जनक बंधु सुत दारा । तनु धनु भवन सुहृद परिवारा ॥ ४ ॥

सब कै ममता ताग बटोरी । मम पद मनहि बाँध बरि डोरी ॥ ५ ॥

समदरसी इच्छा कछु नाही । हरष सोक भय नहिं मन माहीं ॥ ६ ॥

jananī janaka bandhu suta dārā. tanu dhanu bhavana suhr̥da parivārā. 4.
saba kai mamatā tāga baṭōrī. mama pada manahi bām̐dha bari ḍōrī. 5.
samadarasī icchā kachu nāhīm. haraṣa sōka bhaya nahiṁ mana mām̐hīm. 6.

[Now, Lord Ram goes on to describe the glorious virtues of saints which make them dear to him—]

Mother, father, brother, son, wife, body, wealth, home, friends, compatriots and other kith and kin, as well as the family [4]—a person who breaks off all his attachments and infatuations with them, who binds them all in a single rope of dispassion and detachment (i.e. who turns his mind away from them; who is no longer infatuated with them or think of them), and instead tie his Mana (i.e. his heart, mind and sub-conscious) in my holy feet [5] --- (4-5)

--- Who has developed exemplary equanimity and evenness of mind and views, who treats all equally and without any bias, who has no desires, hopes, aspirations and yearnings of any kind, who neither feels excited and elated nor sorrowful and depressed (simply because he practices renunciation, detachment, dispassion, self-restraint and equanimity of the highest degree), who has no fear of any kind (because he has surrendered himself to me who am the supreme Protector, and therefore he has faith that no harm can come to him from any quarter) --- (6)

अस सज्जन मम उर बस कैसें । लोभी हृदयँ बसइ धनु जैसे ॥ ७ ॥
तुम्ह सारिखे संत प्रिय मोरें । धरउँ देह नहिं आन निहोरें ॥ ८ ॥

asa sajjana mama ura basa kaisēm. lōbhī hrdayam̐ basa'i dhanu jaisēm. 7.
tumha sārīkhē santa priya mōrēm. dhara'um̐ dēha nahim āna nihōrēm. 8.

--- Verily I say that such a gentleman finds a place in my heart like worldly wealth has in the heart of a greedy man!¹ (7)

Saintly persons and pure souls like you are very dear to me. It is for them that I (Lord Vishnu) have assumed a form of a human being (as Lord Ram)². (8)

[Note—¹A wise person is one who has broken off all his attachments with these worldly entities as these relationships are temporary and unsustainable. They act like fetters for the Atma, tying it down to the gross world that revolves around and recognizes relationships that treat the gross body of the creature as his true identity instead of the Atma. The problem in this sort of relationship is that the very basis of it is gross and temporary—because both the world and the body of the creature are mortal and perishable. Such relationships are bound to break one day, and this will lead to the agony of separation. Besides this, such relationships act as a deep bog, ensnaring the creature for generations after generations.

The only way out of this dilemma and quandary is to recognize that the Atma is one's truthful self, and that Lord Ram is the Parmatma or the Supreme Atma which is the truthful kith and kin of the individual Atma. The Lord is the real and truthful Father of all the living beings, their true friend and companion. The Atma is pure consciousness like the Parmatma who is the cosmic supreme Consciousness. This entity is eternal and imperishable—and therefore any relationship that is established between the two, i.e. between the Atma of the individual creature and the Parmatma, will have an eternal and sustainable dimension to it.

A greedy person thinks of nothing but money and wealth; he will go to any extent in acquiring it and protecting it; he is virtually infatuated with it—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, stanza no. 1 of Doha no. 130 Kha.

Likewise, Lord Ram is always on the look-out for such persons who have saintly qualities in them, and then goes all out to welcome them and afford all his protection and benevolence to them.

²This stanza clearly establishes that the Supreme Being has come down to earth for the benefit of saints and saintly people.

Lord Ram has taught Sabari about the nine virtues that a devotee of the Lord must possess in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, from Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 35, till Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 36. Then again, Lord Ram has told Kaagbhusund that if a creature has devotion for him and has abandoned all deceit, conceit, pretensions and tricks, then even if his most lowly the Lord accept him willingly—Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 85, till Doha no. 86.

A remarkable thing emerges if we have a close look at all the characters in the story whom Lord Ram addresses as ‘friends’ or ‘saints’ or ‘devotees’ whom he has cheerfully accepted in his fold. All of them are of low birth and are sinful by their bodies. (i) Nishad is a boatman who eats fish as a staple diet. (ii) Sabari is of a low caste. (iii) Sugriv is a monkey by birth, and so is (iv) Hanuman whom the Lord heaps praises with, going to the extent of saying that he will never be able to repay his debts (Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 5-7 that precede Doha no. 32). (v) Vibhishan is born in the demon race. And (vi) Kaagbhusund is a crow.

This list highlights that the Lord has come down to earth to give redemption to the fallen and provide salvation to the humblest and the meekest. A healthy person does not need the care of an expert doctor or nurse; it is the sick who need it. The Lord is that spiritual doctor and nurse!]

दो०. सगुन उपासक परहित निरत नीति दृढ़ नेम ।

ते नर प्रान समान मम जिन्ह केँ द्विज पद प्रेम ॥ ४८ ॥

dōhā.

saguna upāsaka parahita nirata nīti dṛṛha nēma.

tē nara prāna samāna mama jinha kēṁ dvija pada prēma. 48.

Those who worship my (i.e. the Supreme Being’s) Saguna form (i.e. form that is visible and has attributes) {that is, those who worship Lord Ram as being an incarnation of the Supreme Being}¹, those who remain engaged in the welfare of others (instead of causing them pain and miseries)², those who are steady in observing sacraments and other religious duties along with being diligent in following the path of righteousness, propriety, morality and ethical conduct inspite of all provocations and temptations³, and those who have affection (respect) for the holy feet of Dwijis (Brahmins; elderly and learned people)⁴—verily I say that such people are as dear to me as my own life. (Doha no.48)

[Note—¹The difference between the Saguna form of the Lord and his Nirguna form (one without any specific attributes; the cosmic invisible and all-incorporating form) have been elucidated in detail by Lord Ram to preach Bharat, Hanuman and the rest in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, from Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 37, till Doha no. 41.

²The virtue of striving for the welfare of others is lauded elsewhere also—for instance, in Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 14-15 that precede Doha no. 121 it is asserted that “the natural character of saints is that they endeavour or strive to do good of others and care for their welfare by employing their mind, heart and words to the best of their abilities; suffering for the good, happiness and

welfare of others is a character of saints, while being the cause of pain, misery and unhappiness of others is an innate nature of non-saints.” This is the principle of a saint taught by Kaagbhusund, the saintly crow, to Garud, the mount of Lord Vishnu.

³To be steadfast in following the correct path inspite of all provocations is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 2-3 that precede Doha no. 46 (Lord Ram teaches Narad); Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram teaches Bharat and others); and Lanka Kand, Doha no. 34 Kha (Angad tells Ravana).

⁴Having respect for Brahmins is reiterated in Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 16 (when Lord Ram has preached Laxman); and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 38 (Lord Ram taught Bharat and others); and Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 7 that precedes Doha no. 45 (Lord Ram preaches the citizens of Ayodhya).

In these verses, Lord Ram tells Vibhishan that he treats with great respect a person who might have the world as his enemy but has come to seek refuge with the Lord after abandoning all arrogance, attachments, deceit, cunning and pretensions, after having snapped all his relations with the world and its wealth, after renouncing his household and his near and dear ones such as his wife, his son, parents, kith and kin, friends, etc., if he has no desires and treats everything equally and with stoic neutrality, if he has no fear, and if he is not affected by the sense of worldly happiness or sorrow—if such a man surrenders to the Lord and ties himself irrevocably to the holy feet of the Lord with a thread of devotion, love and affection, without any expectations whatsoever, the Lord promises to take care of him, whatever may come.

Those people who worship my Saguna form (i.e. my form as it appears in my incarnation), those who think of the good of others (i.e. are not selfish), those who diligently follow the rules of proper conduct and ethical behaviour as laid down in the scriptures, those who are steadfast in carrying out their duties with due sincerity, and those who love Dwij (elders and learned people)—verily, such persons are very dear to the Lord’s heart.

These verses can be read as follows also—“Lord Ram advised Vibhishan: Those who detach themselves from all worldly relationships and abandon all affection for them and attachment with them, such as with one’s mother, father, friend, son, wife, body, material wealth, homestead, kith and kin, compatriots and all other dear and near ones, and instead bind their Mana (mind and heart) to my holy feet (i.e. surrender before me unconditionally and completely, and treat me as their only relation in this world), those who have developed the grand virtue of equanimity and forbearance, who treat everything and everyone alike, who have no desires or expectations whatsoever, those who remain unruffled and unmoved by either happiness or sorrows, those who have no fear of any kind in their heart (obviously because they have me, the Supreme Lord, as their protector and saviour)—verily I say that such persons (devotees) are very close to my heart and dear to me much like material wealth is very dear and close to the heart of a greedy and selfish man.”

The extent to which Lord Ram loves his devotees is expressed clearly in the aforesaid verses by the Lord himself to Vibhishan, the younger brother of Ravana, when he came to seek refuge with the Lord.]

चौ०. सुनु लंकेस सकल गुन तोरें । तातें तुम्ह अतिसय प्रिय मोरें ॥ १ ॥
 राम बचन सुनि बानर जूथा । सकल कहहिं जय कृपा बरूथा ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

sunu laṅkēsa sakala guna tōrēm̐. tātēm̐ tumha atisaya priya mōrēm̐. 1.
 rāma bacana suni bānara jūthā. sakala kahahim̐ jaya kṛpā barūthā. 2.

Lord Ram told Vibhishan, ‘Listen oh king of Lanka (sunu laṅkēsa)¹! You possess all the noble virtues (of a true devotee). That is why you are extremely dear to me.’ (1)

When the huge gathering of monkeys heard these words of Lord Ram, they cheered him enthusiastically and exclaimed, ‘Glory to Lord Ram who is a font of mercy, kindness, grace and compassion.’² (2)

[Note—¹Lord Ram has earlier too addressed Vibhishan as ‘the king of Lanka’—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 4 that precedes Doha no. 46.

²The monkeys were surprised at the magnanimity of Lord Ram and his graceful nature that inspite of Vibhishan himself repeatedly saying that he is sinful, the Lord praised his good virtues while neglecting his negativities.]

सुनत बिभीषनु प्रभु कै बानी । नहिं अघात श्रवनामृत जानी ॥ ३ ॥
 पद अंबुज गहि बारहिं बारा । हृदयँ समात न प्रेमु अपारा ॥ ४ ॥

sunata bibhīṣanu prabhu kai bānī. nahim̐ aghāta śravanāmṛta jānī. 3.
 pada ambuja gahi bārahim̐ bārā. hṛdayam̐ samāta na prēmu apārā. 4.

When Vibhishan heard the pleasing words of Lord Ram that were as sweet as nectar for him, he felt so exceedingly glad that he could not have enough of it¹. (3)

So emotionally overwhelmed did Vibhishan become that he repeatedly clasped the holy lotus-like feet of Lord Ram even as his heart could not contain the surging waves of affection and gratitude towards the Lord Ram that heaved inside his bosom and brimmed over. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, Vibhishan had not expected, even in his dreams, that he would be so warmly welcomed by Lord Ram and shown so much affection by him. It was for him a fountain of nectar from which the more he drank the more he wanted to drink.]

सुनहु देव सचराचर स्वामी । प्रनतपाल उर अंतरजामी ॥ ५ ॥
 उर कछु प्रथम बासना रही । प्रभु पद प्रीति सरित सो बही ॥ ६ ॥

sunahu dēva sacarācara svāmī. pranatapāla ura antarajāmī. 5.
ura kachu prathama bāsanā rahī. prabhu pada prīti sarita sō bahī. 6.

Vibhishan said, ‘Listen oh Lord (sunahu dēva)! You are the supreme Lord of the animate as well as the inanimate aspects of this creation (sacarācara svāmī). You are the Lord who protects all those who surrender themselves at your feet (pranatapāla). And you are the Lord who knows the innermost feelings and thoughts of all living beings (ura antarajāmī). (5)

I honestly acknowledge that my heart earlier had some Vasana (passions and desires pertaining to the sense objects of the world; a desire for self-gratification) present inside it, but now all of them have been washed away in the river symbolized by affection for your holy feet that has sprouted inside my heart¹. (6)

[Note—¹Vibhishan accepts that his heart had worldly desires earlier, but not now, because all negativities in his heart have been washed away once he has developed affection for the holy feet of Lord Ram. In this context, refer to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 48 herein above. Vibhishan says that now his heart has been purified of all negative traits.]

अब कृपाल निज भगति पावनी । देहु सदा सिव मन भावनी ॥ ७ ॥
एवमस्तु कहि प्रभु रनधीरा । मागा तुरत सिंधु कर नीरा ॥ ८ ॥

aba krpāla nija bhagati pāvanī. dēhu sadā siva mana bhāvanī. 7.
ēvamastu kahi prabhu ranadhīrā. māgā turata sindhu kara nīrā. 8.

Oh Lord, be kind enough to grant me an abiding devotion for you, a devotion that is pure itself and purifies those who are blessed by it, a devotion that is eternally loved by Lord Shiva and pleases his heart.¹ (7)

Saying ‘so be it’, the Lord who is steadfast in the battle-field (i.e. who keeps his words and never turns back inspite of the greatest adversities) asked for some water from the ocean (because no other water was available). [Why did Lord Ram ask for water is answered in the verses that follow below.] (8)

[Note—¹Lord Ram does not want any kind of tribute from his devotees except devotion. Anyone who asks the Lord for the grant of devotion (Bhakti) endears himself to the Lord. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Uttar Kand, (i) Chaupai line nos. 1-4 that precede Doha no. 45; (ii) Chaupai line nos. 5-6 that precede Doha no. 84; (iii) Chaupai line nos. 3-5 that precede Doha no. 85; (iv) Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede Doha no. 86.]

जदपि सखा तव इच्छा नाहीं । मोर दरसु अमोघ जग माहीं ॥ ९ ॥
अस कहि राम तिलक तेहि सारा । सुमन बृष्टि नभ भई अपारा ॥ १० ॥

jadapi sakhā tava icchā nāhīm. mōra darasu amōgha jaga māhīm. 9.
asa kahi rāma tilaka tēhi sārā. sumana br̥ṣṭi nabha bhaṭi apārā. 10.

He said to Vibhishan, ‘Friend (sakhā), though you have no desire, but meeting me and asking for my blessings never goes in vain.

[To wit, although you don’t want anything, yet I have a vow to keep, which is that anyone who comes to me seeking my shelter and protection can’t remain unfulfilled. You were an heir to the throne of Lanka at the time you came to me. So shall it be—you will get your rights back. And secondly, you wish to be my devotee because you ask for my devotion, so that also would be true.]’ (9)

Saying this, Lord Ram anointed Vibhishan (by sprinkling the water of the ocean that he had asked for) to fulfill his vows as stated above.

Observing this wonderful development, the gods showered flowers from the sky (heaven)¹. (10)

[Note—¹Why did the gods shower flowers upon Lord Ram as well as Vibhishan? The gods wished to celebrate this happy occasion when Lord Ram accepted Vibhishan as his devotee, and at the same time anointed him as the next king of Lanka, thereby sealing the fate of Ravana. This was what the gods were waiting for. They felt exceedingly glad, and rained flowers to express their thanks and show their happiness to Lord Ram.

The gods were full of praise for Lord Ram because the Lord had willingly suffered so much for their cause. They were full of praise for Vibhishan because in spite of being born as a demon he had shown such high degree of spiritualism and purity of heart that the Lord himself praised him.]

दो०. रावन क्रोध अनल निज स्वास समीर प्रचंड ।
जरत बिभीषनु राखेउ दीन्हेउ राजु अखंड ॥ ४९ (क) ॥
जो संपति सिव रावनहि दीन्हि दिऐँ दस माथ ।
सोइ संपदा बिभीषनहि सकुचि दीन्हि रघुनाथ ॥ ४९ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

rāvana krōdha anala nija svāsa samīra pracaṇḍa.
jarata bibhīṣanu rākhē’u dīnhē’u rāju akhaṇḍa. 49 (a).
jō sampati siva rāvanahi dīnhi di’ēm̐ dasa mātha.
sō’i sampadā bibhīṣanahi sakuci dīnhi raghunātha. 49 (b).

Ravana’s anger was like a fiercely raging fire, and the breath of Vibhishan was like the hot wind that fanned this fire on its own. [To wit, the anger of Ravana could not be calmed down as long as Vibhishan would be alive.]

Vibhishan was being scorched by this fire of Ravana (i.e. he was tormented by fear of Ravana’s wrath). Lord Ram extended his protection to him so that he escaped being scorched from that fire. Not only this, the Lord rewarded Vibhishan by anointing him as the next king of Lanka. (Doha no. 49-a)

That immense fortune which was granted to Ravana by Lord Shiva in lieu of the ten heads the former had offered to the Lord as a sacrifice while doing severe Tapa (austerity and penance) to please the latter, the whole of this fortune and the majesty of the kingdom of Lanka was transferred or conferred by Lord Ram to Vibhishan in a hesitant manner¹. (Doha no. 49-b)

[Note—¹Why was Lord Ram feeling so shy, hesitant and reluctant while conferring to Vibhishan the kingdom of Lanka and transferring the entire wealth of the kingdom to him? There are four prominent reasons for this as follows:-

One is that the outcome of the impending war was not yet certain, and so to confer the throne of Lanka to Vibhishan at this time seemed a little premature, based on presumptions and conjectures, and a bit too optimistic and far-fetched.

The second reason is that the city which Vibhishan would inherit as a boon from Lord Ram would have been devastated by the end of the war; it was already in a shambles after Hanuman burnt it. So Lord Ram felt very reluctant while granting this boon as it was not a proper reward that was given to Vibhishan. But under the prevailing circumstances, there was nothing better that could be given to him.

The third reason is that by rewarding Vibhishan, Lord Ram was rewarding someone who had betrayed his own brother. This made the Lord hesitant as it was not a proper thing to reward someone who had committed treason. But it was the time of war, and during wars rules change. What is treason for one party is a welcome move for the other party; what is martyrdom for one is the killing of an enemy for another; what is defeat for one is a victory for the other. So it was acceptable.

And the fourth reason was military strategy. By accepting Vibhishan in his camp with a warm show of welcome and affection, and then anointing him as the next sovereign of Lanka, Lord Ram ensured his unflinching loyalty and allegiance towards himself. The Lord's friendly attitude and affectionate gestures had a profound positive impact on Vibhishan's psyche, as he was emotionally traumatized and mentally in an extremely distressed state after the rough treatment that was meted out to him at Ravana's court a short while ago. By making Vibhishan, who knew all the secrets of Lanka and its army, a faithful and loyal ally, Lord Ram had staged a virtual coup against his enemy Ravana as would be proved during the course of the epic war. We shall be reading, in due course, how Vibhishan had played a crucial role in Lord Ram's victory over Ravana by helping him with vital information about Lanka and its army, advising on proper strategies by which breach could be made in the demons' defenses, even alerting the Lord when Ravana was performing a sacrifice, which, if successfully done, would have made him immune to death, and in the final hours of the epic battle by divulging to Lord Ram the location of the secret receptacle of Amrit, the ambrosia of eternity, that kept Ravana alive, a vital clue that enabled the Lord to kill him by drying up this nectar by a volley of hot arrows.

To wit, if there is an impending war, and the brother of a king against whom a rival king has launched an assault comes voluntarily to join the latter, no prudent king would refuse to welcome him; rather, the latter king would see it as a golden god-sent opportunity that ought to be grasped with both hands!]

चौ०. अस प्रभु छाड़ि भजहिं जे आना । ते नर पसु बिनु पूँछ बिषाना ॥ १ ॥

निज जन जानि ताहि अपनावा । प्रभु सुभाव कपि कुल मन भावा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

asa prabhu chāḍi bhajahim jē ānā. tē nara pasu binu pūm̐cha biṣānā. 1.
nija jana jāni tāhi apanāvā. prabhu subhāva kapi kula mana bhāvā. 2.

[Lord Shiva observed—] ‘Anyone who abandons such a (magnanimous, benevolent, kind, obliging and gracious) Lord as Sri Ram, and instead worships and adores some other Lord, such people are indeed like animals that have no horns and tails¹. (1)

All the Kapis (monkeys) warmly welcomed and appreciated this grand and noble nature of Lord Ram that he cheerfully accepted anyone who came to seek refuge with him, for the Lord not only gave him shelter but also treated the new comer with great affection and care as if he was an old acquaintance of his, someone who was not a stranger but one of his own close devotees and followers.² (2)

[Note—¹To wit, those who do not worship and adore Lord Ram and seek shelter with him, instead preferring some other Lord to whom they are devoted and offer their allegiance, such people are indeed extremely foolish and unfortunate. They are born as humans but are no better than animals who lack wisdom and intelligence, for they do not know what is good or bad for them.

²This noble character of Lord Ram—which made him so loved by and endeared to his devotees—answered one unasked question that had been lingering in the minds of the monkey chieftains ever since Lord Ram took the side of Sugriv and crowned him as the king of Kishkindha after eliminating Sugriv’s brother Baali. The question was this: Why did Lord Ram decided to favour Sugriv vis-à-vis Baali? The monkeys got their answer now—that it was in the nature of Lord Ram, it was an integral character of his that he would invariably extend his helping hand to those who seek his help, especially when the Lord feels that injustice has been done to them. The Lord cannot turn away those who ask for his grace and blessings, especially when the seeker is distressed and feeling helpless.

In the case of Sugriv the Lord felt grave injustice has been done to him by his elder brother Baali who first beat him mercilessly and then threw him out of the kingdom, kept his wife as a mistress, and even after inflicting this humiliation was always baying for Sugriv’s blood, being on the lookout for a chance to kill him. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Doha no. 5—to Chaupai line no. 10 that precedes Doha no. 7; and Chaupai line nos. 6-10 that precede Doha no. 9.}

It was reminiscent of what has happened in the present case of Vibhishan—he was kicked and humiliated by his elder brother Ravana and thrown out of the kingdom, and if Lord Ram refused to provide protection to Vibhishan it was sure that Ravana would have killed him at the first opportunity.

So when the monkey chieftains observed this nature of Lord Ram, they felt very happy; now they knew why the Lord had sided with Sugriv.]

पुनि सर्वग्य सर्व उर बासी । सर्वरूप सब रहित उदासी ॥ ३ ॥
बोले बचन नीति प्रतिपालक । कारन मनुज दनुज कुल घलक ॥ ४ ॥
सुनु कपीस लंकापति बीरा । केहि बिधि तरिअ जलधि गंभीरा ॥ ५ ॥
संकुल मकर उरग झष जाती । अति अगाध दुस्तर सब भाँती ॥ ६ ॥

puni sarbagya sarba ura bāsī. sarbarūpa saba rahita udāsī. 3.
 bōlē bacana nīti pratipālaka. kārana manuja danuja kula ghalaka. 4.
 sunu kapīsa laṅkāpati bīrā. kēhi bidhi tari'a jaladhi gambhīrā. 5.
 saṅkula makara uraga jhaṣa jātī. ati agādha dustara saba bhāmṭī. 6.

Then Lord Ram—the Supreme Being who is all-knowing and omniscient, who resides in the subtle space of the heart of all living beings (as their pure consciousness known as the Atma), who has revealed himself in all the forms that constitute this creation, especially as a human being with the purpose of eliminating the scourge of the demon race, but who, in spite of his omnipresence and an all-pervading nature, is essentially detached from everything¹—spoke wise and prudent words that suited the occasion, and also conformed to the form of a human being that he had assumed². (3-4)

Lord Ram said, ‘Listen the brave king of monkeys (Sugriv) and the equally brave king of Lanka (i.e. Vibhishan)³. Tell me now, how shall we cross the formidable ocean? (5)

It is full of huge alligators and crocodiles, as well as formidable sea serpents and fish of all denominations, and of all sizes and shapes. It is also deep and vast, appearing to be un-crossable.’ (6)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram, is a personified form of the cosmic Consciousness known as the Parmatma, the Supreme Atma or the Supreme Being, also known as ‘Brahm’. This whole creation is revelation of Brahm, which implies that each single entity in this creation is a form of Brahm. If the ‘Consciousness’ is known as the Parmatma at the macrocosmic level, it is known as the ‘Atma’ of the individual living being at the microcosmic level. That is to say, there is nothing that is not “Ram”. In spite of this universal Truth, the Lord remains detached from everything. So therefore, in spite of residing in the heart of all living beings and assuming the identity of everything that exists in this vast creation, Lord Ram is deemed to be independent from them.

²Lord Ram was the almighty Supreme Being, and as such he need not consult anyone and seek advice. But presently he was in the form of a human being, so he had to act and speak as a human being, and not as the Supreme Being. How would a human being behave when faced with a daunting challenge? He would consult his friends and well-wishers; a king would consult his ministers and commanders. So therefore, Lord Ram sought advice from his friends and advisors, presently Vibhishan and Sugriv, about what is to be done now.

³Lord Ram has addressed Vibhishan as the ‘king of Lanka’ (laṅkāpati) because he had declared him as the next king of Lanka once the war was over by anointing him—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 49 along with Chaupai line nos. 8-10 that precede it.]

कह लंकेस सुनहु रघुनायक । कोटि सिंधु सोषक तव सायक ॥ ७ ॥
 जद्यपि तदपि नीति असि गाई । बिनय करिअ सागर सन जाई ॥ ८ ॥

kaha laṅkēsa sunahu raghunāyaka. kōṭi sindhu sōṣaka tava sāyaka. 7.
jadyapi tadapi nīti asi gā'ī. binaya kari'a sāgara sana jā'ī. 8.

Vibhishan offered his advice to Lord Ram by replying, 'Oh Lord of the Raghus (raghunāyaka), listen. Although your arrows have the ability to dry up countless such oceans by its fiery nature, yet it is prudent and better advised to first try a gentler method to tame the ocean politely (before resorting to the use of force)¹.

So therefore, you should pray to the deity of the ocean, requesting him to give us a passage across the surface of the water. (7-8)

[Note—¹Vibhishan wished to ensure that the deity of the ocean is not offended as far as it was possible; this was to safeguard the rear of the monkey army once the war started in Lanka by keeping the deity of the ocean in good humour by not offending the ocean and making it their enemy. A friendly ocean would be helpful during the course of the war in case of an emergency when the need for a strategic retreat arose, and the army of Lord Ram wished to leave the shore of Lanka quickly. Surely it is not wise to have someone who is inimical in one's backyard.]

दो०. प्रभु तुम्हार कुलगुर जलधि कहिहि उपाय बिचारि ।
बिनु प्रयास सागर तरिहि सकल भालु कपि धारि ॥ ५० ॥
dōhā.

prabhu tumhāra kulagura jaladhi kahihi upāya bicāri.
binu prayāsa sāgara tarihi sakala bhālu kapi dhāri. 50.

Oh Lord (prabhu)! The deity of the ocean is a senior member of your clan; he is one of your ancestors¹. Hence, it is necessary to show him due respect and seek his permission to cross the water, for then he will consider your request and suggest a solution so that the monkey and bear warriors would be able to cross the ocean easily, without taking much trouble. (Doha no. 50)

[Note—¹King Sagar, who was an ancient king and an ancestor of Lord Ram, had created the ocean by getting the earth dug up. This is the reason the ocean was called after him as 'Saagar'. So, the deity of the ocean will certainly cooperate with Lord Ram as he belongs to the family of king Sagar. It is also proper to seek the blessings of one's ancestors at the beginning of an enterprise instead of offending them.

Hence, the best course of action would be to first politely ask the deity of the ocean to allow the army to pass over the surface of the water before resorting to some other means.]

चौ०. सखा कही तुम्ह नीकि उपाई । करिअ दैव जौं होइ सहाई ॥ १ ॥
मंत्र न यह लछिमन मन भावा । राम बचन सुनि अति दुख पावा ॥ २ ॥
नाथ दैव कर कवन भरोसा । सोषिअ सिंधु करिअ मन रोसा ॥ ३ ॥
कादर मन कहूँ एक अधारा । दैव दैव आलसी पुकारा ॥ ४ ॥

caupā'ī.

sakhā kahī tumha nīki upā'ī. kari'a daiva jaum̐ hō'i sahā'ī. 1.
 mantra na yaha lachimana mana bhāvā. rāma bacana suni ati dukha pāvā. 2.
 nātha daiva kara kavana bharōsā. sōṣi'a sindhu kari'a mana rōsā. 3.
 kādara mana kahum̐ ēka adhārā. daiva daiva ālasī pukārā. 4.

Lord Ram replied to Vibhishan, 'My friend. The course of action that you suggest is indeed right, and we may succeed in it if the gods are favourable and willing to help and cooperate in this matter.' (1)

This council of Vibhishan, however, did not find favour with Laxman; he did not agree with it. He felt very sad when he heard Lord Ram speak in its favour. (2)

So he (Laxman) interjected and expressed his strong reservations in this method of trying to appease the deity of the ocean by begging it to give the Lord and his army a passage across the water of the ocean, and relying on the mercy of the gods to succeed in this endeavour.

Laxman said, 'Oh Lord! What reliance can be put on gods and their whims; how can one be certain of the freakish nature of fate and fortune? Me thinks that it would be wiser for you to be more determined in your mind and become proactive; you should become aggressive and dry up the ocean (with your fiery arrows)¹. (3)

Only those who are cowards and lazy think of praying to gods and humbly submit themselves to their wishes, blaming their misfortunes to pre-determined destiny². (4)

[Note—¹Laxman doubted Vibhishan's integrity; is it possible that he was trying to delay the progress of the Lord's army by wasting time in prayers and attempts at appeasement of the ocean? Is Vibhishan secretly not in favour of launching an assault on Lanka? Does he want that the demons get a chance to prepare for the war during the time the Lord spends in prayers and making humble requests to the ocean's deity to let his army go across the water of the ocean?

Or is it possible that Vibhishan is playing some kind of dirty trick on Lord Ram by making him pray to the ocean and submitting himself to the mercy of its deity who may grant initial permission to the Lord to cross the heaving waters of the mighty ocean, only to suddenly betray him and go back on his words while the Lord's army is mid-way across its surface; in this scenario the whole army would be drowned! Perhaps Vibhishan has cooked up the story of his being kicked out of the kingdom by his brother Ravana so that he can gain the Lord's sympathy, only to stab him in the back at the first opportunity. It is quite possible that the demons have some secret tactical understanding with the ocean's deity who may easily agree with the Lord's request to allow his army to go across the ocean, and then submerge the whole army while it is left to the mercy of the water of the ocean, with no solid ground under its feet.

Laxman thought over all these possibilities and determined that the best course of action was not to be humble and submissive, but to be aggressive and proactive. This attitude would also boost the morale of the Lord's army as all its soldiers (the monkey and bear warriors) were in favour of an all-out war instead of making compromises. If they found that their own Lord is weak in mind, being fearful of gods and submissive to their whims, and seeks an easy way out of things instead of being determined and confident of his own abilities to face hurdles and adversities, then it would be disastrous for the outcome of the war.

²To wit, lazy people want everything served to them on a platter; they loathe making effort to achieve success and attain their goals. They meekly accept whatever comes their way. If success comes to them and they make some gain, they say that they are lucky; if they fail they blame their misfortunes on bad destiny.

Similarly, cowards don't have the courage to stand up boldly to face their enemy and adversary; they meekly submit themselves to their opponents without a fight.

Neither of these two attitudes is good for a man of excellent character. Submitting to the ocean humbly and meekly will not be proper for the Lord; he should take up arms and show his mettle by making the ocean submit to his might instead.]

सुनत बिहसि बोले रघुबीरा । ऐसेहिं करब धरहु मन धीरा ॥ ५ ॥

अस कहि प्रभु अनुजहि समुझाई । सिंधु समीप गए रघुराई ॥ ६ ॥

sunata bihasi bōlē raghubīrā. aisēhiṁ karaba dharahu mana dhīrā. 5.
asa kahi prabhu anujahi samujhāī. sindhu samīpa ga'e raghurāī. 6.

When Lord Raghubir (Lord Sri Ram) heard what Laxman said, he smiled and said, 'Wait a while; have patience for I shall do as you advice.'¹ (5)

In this way, the Lord reassured his younger brother (Laxman). Then, the Lord of the Raghus ("raghurāī"; Lord Ram) went near the ocean (i.e. he went to shore of the ocean). (6)

[Note—¹Lord Ram fully appreciated Laxman's views. He smiled at Laxman to indicate that he is aware of the situation, but there is a reason why he wishes to follow Vibhishan's advice first, before taking up arms against the ocean. What was the reason? First, the Lord wished to tell Vibhishan that he gives importance to him and treats him as his close associate. From a strategic and military point of view it was very important to take Vibhishan into confidence and make him believe that the Lord has great faith in him and fully relies on him, because Vibhishan can help the Lord and his army by disclosing all the secrets of the demons, their strengths and weaknesses, the chinks in the defences of the demon army and the fort of Lanka, which in turn will enable the Lord's army to easily overrun obstacles as soon as the war begins, as well as during the course of the war.

By smiling at Laxman the Lord indicated to him that he knows what the former says is true, but "let us wait for a while to prove that Vibhishan is wrong". This will be helpful in the future, for at times when Lord Ram or Laxman would have to neglect Vibhishan or overrule his advice during the heat of battle, they would have a precedent to justify their actions—that Vibhishan's council is not acceptable at that particular instance as he oftentimes makes an error of judgement, as is evident from the case when he had advised the Lord to pray to the deity of the ocean to allow the army to cross the barrier that the ocean presented to its progress, but which method failed completely.]

प्रथम प्रनाम कीन्ह सिरु नाई । बैठे पुनि तट दर्भ डसाई ॥ ७ ॥
जबहिं बिभीषन प्रभु पहिं आए । पाछें रावन दूत पठाए ॥ ८ ॥

prathama pranāma kīnha siru nā'ī. baiṭhē puni taṭa darbha ḍasā'ī. 7.
jabahiṁ bibhīṣana prabhu pahim ā'ē. pāchēm rāvana dūta paṭhā'ē. 8.

When the Lord reached to shore of the ocean, he first bowed his head to the deity of the ocean to pay his obeisance to it, and then spread a seating mat on the ground near the shore and sat down on it calmly to pray humbly and meditate¹. (7)

In the meantime, when Vibhishan had left Lanka and come to Lord Ram, Ravana had sent one of his trusted spies (named Suk) to follow Vibhishan and track his movements. [This spy was tasked with reconnaissance, and to report back to Ravana about the latest developments.] (8)

[Note—¹To wit, Lord Ram approached the ocean in a peaceful way, without showing any sign of aggression. He had a calm mind and a submissive demeanour. He cast aside his arms, the bow and the arrow, to indicate that he has no intention to challenge the might of the deity of the ocean.]

दो०. सकल चरित तिन्ह देखे धरें कपट कपि देह ।
प्रभु गुन हृदयँ सराहहिं सरनागत पर नेह ॥ ५१ ॥
dōhā.

sakala carita tinha dēkhē dharēm kapaṭa kapi dēha.
prabhu guna hṛdayam' sarāhahim saranāgata para nēha. 51.

That spy had assumed a false form of a monkey to avoid detection. In this deceitful form he had closely observed everything first hand.

He was greatly impressed by Lord Ram's gracious and magnanimous nature by which he shows such exceptional grace and mercy on those who come to seek refuge with him and surrender themselves at his feet¹. The spy therefore highly praised the Lord in his heart for this excellent and glorious virtue of his. (Doha no. 51)

[Note—¹The spy was amazed at the warm welcome that Lord Ram extended to Vibhishan, and accepting him in his camp affectionately inspite of his knowing that Vibhishan was a demon and a brother of his enemy Ravana, and also while his own commanders, such as Sugriv etc., expressed a strong reservation against accepting Vibhishan in the camp as he might spy on them and relay all information to their enemy, the demons. {Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 43—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 45.}]

This attribute of Lord Ram that he cares more for those who are suffering and seek his protection than for his own safety overwhelmed Suk, the spy, so much so that he could not conceal his joy at having met such a gracious Lord. His happiness was so profound that he could not suppress his emotions; he loudly proclaimed the Lord's glory which betrayed his true identity and led to his capture, as will be evident in the following verses.]

चौ०. प्रगट बखानहिं राम सुभाऊ । अति सप्रेम गा बिसरि दुराऊ ॥ १ ॥
 रिपु के दूत कपिन्ह तब जाने । सकल बाँधि कपीस पहिं आने ॥ २ ॥
 caupāī.

pragaṭa bakhānahim rāma subhā'ū. ati saprēma gā bisari durā'ū. 1.
 ripu kē dūta kapinha taba jānē. sakala bām̐dhi kapīsa pahim ānē. 2.

Ravana's agent or spy (named Suk) was so overwhelmed with joy at having witnessed the nobility of Lord Ram's heart as well as his magnanimous and gracious nature that he could not suppress his emotions. He became ecstatic so much that he affectionately lauded the greatness of Lord Ram and his excellent virtues openly, in a very effusive way. For a moment he forgot that his own master (Ravana) was inimical to Lord Ram, and there was an intense animosity between the demon race and the Lord. (1)

[This burst of emotional ecstasy betrayed him, and the monkeys immediately caught him as being an outsider.] The Kapis (the monkey warriors; the guards of the Lord's army) realised that he was an agent or a spy of the enemy (Ravana, the king of the demons). So they caught hold of him, tied him up, and brought him as a captive to their king Sugriv. (2)

कह सुग्रीव सुनहु सब बानर । अंग भंग करि पठवहु निसिचर ॥ ३ ॥
 सुनि सुग्रीव बचन कपि धाए । बाँधि कटक चहु पास फिराए ॥ ४ ॥
 बहु प्रकार मारन कपि लागे । दीन पुकारत तदपि न त्यागे ॥ ५ ॥
 जो हमार हर नासा काना । तेहि कोसलाधीस कै आना ॥ ६ ॥

kaha sugrīva sunahu saba bānara. aṅga bhaṅga kari paṭhavahu nisicara. 3.
 suni sugrīva bacana kapi dhā'ē. bām̐dhi kaṭaka cahu pāsa phirā'ē. 4.
 bahu prakāra mārana kapi lāgē. dīna pukārata tadapi na tyāgē. 5.
 jō hamāra hara nāsā kānā. tēhi kōsalādhīsa kai ānā. 6.

Sugriv instructed his monkey warriors, 'Listen all of you monkeys. Disfigure this demon by mutilating his body, and then let him go back¹. (3)

The monkeys immediately lunged at the spy and tied him more tightly; then they made him walk around the whole camp of the monkey army as a captive to humiliate him. (4)

While the spy was being taken around the camp, the monkey warriors beat him mercilessly in different ways, subjecting him to kicks and blows. He pleaded for mercy and piteously cried for help, but to no avail, as the monkeys continued to jeer at him and beat him viciously. (5)

Overcome with dismay and seeing no hope of succour any other way, the spy finally decided to invoke the merciful nature of Lord Ram in order to get rid of his tormentors. He pleaded, 'In the name of the Lord of Kaushal ("kōsalādhīsa"; Lord Ram) I solemnly urge you not to harm me any further, and not to cut off my nose or ear².' (6)

[Note—¹We may recall that when Hanuman was caught and brought to the court of Ravana in Lanka, the demon king also gave similar instructions—refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes Doha no. 24.

It appears that at the time to which our Story relates it was a practice to punish a spy by mutilating him and sending him back to his master as a token of causing insult and inflicting injury to the master himself. It was a sort of a challenge to the opposite party to come forward to settle scores if he dares to do so, or otherwise accept defeat. It was a grave provocation to the master himself who had sent the messenger or the agent, as the latter was merely carrying out his duty and acting on behalf of his master.

²Sugriv had not told his warriors to cut-off the 'nose and ears' of the spy; he had merely instructed them to mutilate him. How then did the spy guess that his captors were preparing to chop off his nose and ears? Well, the answer is simple: There was a precedent; Laxman had cut-off the nose and ears of Supernakha, the sister of Ravana. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Aranya Kand, Doha no. 17.

So the spy feared that these monkeys would follow the example set by Laxman and repeat what he had done to the demoness Supernakha.]

सुनि लछिमन सब निकट बोलाए । दया लागि हंसि तुरत छोड़ाए ॥ ७ ॥
रावन कर दीजहु यह पाती । लछिमन बचन बाचु कुलघाती ॥ ८ ॥

sunī lachimana saba nikaṭa bōlā'ē. dayā lāgi haṁsi turata chōṛā'ē. 7.
rāvana kara dījahu yaha pātī. lachimana bacana bācu kulaghātī. 8.

When Laxman heard the pitiful cries of the demon, he called everyone near. When he found out what had happened, he took pity for the demon and smiled, ordering him to be set free immediately. (7)

Then he gave the demon a letter for Ravana and said, 'Give this letter to Ravana, the one who would ruin his own race, and tell him to read this missive as a personal message from Laxman. (8)

दो०. कहेहु मुखागर मूढ़ सन मम संदेसु उदार ।
सीता देइ मिलहु न त आवा कालु तुम्हार ॥ ५२ ॥
dōhā.

kahēhu mukhāgara mūrḥa sana mama sandēsu udāra.
sītā dē'i milahu na ta āvā kālu tumhāra. 52.

Tell that stupid fellow in an emphatic way that I am sending this message to him for his own welfare and good.

Tell him that he should give (return) Sita back and come to meet us to make peace. Otherwise, let it be known to him that his doom is a foregone conclusion; that Death is coming to him sooner than he expected.' (Doha no. 52)

चौ०. तुरत नाइ लछिमन पद माथा । चले दूत बरनत गुन गाथा ॥ १ ॥
कहत राम जसु लंकाँ आए । रावन चरन सीस तिन्ह नाए ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

turata nā'i lachimana pada māthā. calē dūta baranata guna gāthā. 1.
kahata rāma jasu laṅkāṁ ā'ē. rāvana carana sīsa tinha nā'ē. 2.

The messenger bowed his head to Laxman and immediately departed for Lanka, lauding Laxman's virtues and extolling his qualities on his way back home. (1)

At the time when he reached Lanka, the messenger was applauding the excellent glories of Lord Ram. Then he went to the court of Ravana and bowed his head at the latter's feet. (2)

बिहसि दसानन पूँछी बाता । कहसि न सुक आपनि कुसलाता ॥ ३ ॥
पुनि कहु खबरि बिभीषन केरी । जाहि मृत्यु आई अति नेरी ॥ ४ ॥
करत राज लंका सठ त्यागी । होइहि जव कर कीट अभागी ॥ ५ ॥

bihasi dasānana pūṁchī bātā. kahasi na suka āpani kusalātā. 3.
puni kahu khabari bibhīṣana kērī. jāhi mṛtyu ā'ī ati nērī. 4.
karata rāja laṅkā saṭha tyāgī. hō'ihī java kara kiṭa abhāgī. 5.

When Ravana saw the messenger, he laughed in a derisive manner¹ and asked him, 'Well, why don't you first tell me about your welfare?' (3)

Then report to me about Vibhishan whose death seems to have come calling upon him. (4)

He (Vibhishan) is such a stupid fellow that while he was living a comfortable life as a ruler in Lanka where he could have lived without fear, he chose to leave it, and now (by joining that hermit, Lord Ram) he will die like that wretched beetle that gets crushed and smothered along with the grains of barley when they are crushed to make flour². (5)

[Note—¹Why did Ravana laugh? When he saw the messenger standing silently as if in a state of confusion, he thought that the latter had faced some great trouble and was yet to overcome the mental trauma of his experience. The fact is that the messenger was indeed emotionally overwhelmed and so dazed that he stood silently, unable to speak anything. His speechlessness was not out of any bad experience, but because he was uncertain what to say and how to express himself.

He was so impressed by the good nature of Lord Ram and Laxman that when he stood before his own master Ravana, whose evil nature he was well acquainted with, he was undecided for some moment what to say.

Should he speak the truth about his own first hand experience and tell Ravana and all other demons present in the court that Lord Ram is not the sort he is depicted to be by their king (Ravana), for he found the Lord to be extremely gracious, generous and kind unlike what he expected of him according to the general bad impression he had had of Lord Ram due to the misinformation given by Ravana about him, or should he speak lies and criticise the Lord just to please Ravana, out of fear of annoying him which might cost him his own life?

The messenger was in a dilemma for some time, but then he chose the path of 'Truth' and decided to tell Ravana that he was pursuing a wrong path by unnecessarily confronting Lord Ram. This will be clear when he spoke.

²To wit, if Vibhishan had remained in Lanka he would have lived a life like that of a prince, because he is my younger brother. But when death comes calling, even the wisest man loses his senses; so he fell pray to the trap laid out for him by the death god by abandoning Lanka and joining the camp of Lord Ram. His fate is doomed now, for when the war begins and Lord Ram's army is crushed by the demon army, Vibhishan too would perish along with the rest of them. Don't blame me for Vibhishan's destiny.]

पुनि कहु भालु कीस कटकाई । कठिन काल प्रेरित चलि आई ॥ ६ ॥
जिन्ह के जीवन कर रखवारा । भयउ मृदुल चित सिंधु बिचारा ॥ ७ ॥
कहु तपसिन्ह कै बात बहोरी । जिन्ह के हृदयँ त्रास अति मोरी ॥ ८ ॥

puni kahu bhālu kīsa kaṭakā'ī. kaṭhina kāla prērita cali ā'ī. 6.
jinha kē jīvana kara rakhavārā. bhaya'u mṛdula cita sindhu bicārā. 7.
kahu tapasinha kai bāta bahōrī. jinha kē hṛdayam' trāsa ati mōrī. 8.

Tell me next about the army of a motley horde of monkeys and bears who have dared to come here, driven by their dark and doomed fate. [Tell me about their numbers, their arms, their enthusiasm, their strengths and their weaknesses etc.] (6)

Fortunately, the poor Ocean has been kind-hearted and graceful enough to become a protector of their lives by standing in the way and preventing them from proceeding any further!

[But will the Ocean succeed in saving their lives for long? I don't think so, for this poor fellow is not strong enough to counter the force of Providence and Destiny which have decided about the doom of these poor monkeys and bears, for sooner rather than later they would overcome the resistance offered by the Ocean and cross over to Lanka where 'death' awaits them with open arms.] (7)

After that, tell me more about those two hermits (Lord Ram and Laxman) who harbour an intense fear of me secretly in their hearts.

[To wit, they are terribly scared of me in their hearts, but put up a bold face outwardly as if they do not care for me. Well, let me hear about them, and tell me

about their general behaviour and facial expressions that would betray their nervousness and the gravity of the fear lurking in their minds and hearts.] (8)

दो०. की भइ भेंट कि फिरि गए श्रवन सुजसु सुनि मोर ।
कहसि न रिपु दल तेज बल बहुत चकित चित तोर ॥ ५३ ॥
dōhā.

kī bha'i bhēṇṭa ki phiri ga'e śravana sujasu suni mōra.
kahasi na ripu dala tēja bala bahuta cakita cita tōra. 53.

Did you meet those hermits, or did they turn back and return home after hearing of my glory and fame¹.

I observe that you seem to be extremely dazed and out of your wits. Well, what is the matter with you; why don't you come out of your shell and frankly disclose what confounds you. Why don't you tell us about what you saw and experienced about the enemy's strength and abilities as well as his weaknesses that has left you so much perplexed?' (Doha no. 53)

[Note—¹Tell me if you found those two hermit brothers, or was it that they decided not to confront me and turned back after hearing of my matchless reputation as an invincible warrior whose strength, powers, valour and abilities have enabled him to subdue even the so-called powerful gods of heaven, and who has conquered every known powerful army in this world as no one has been able to stand before him in the battle-field.]

चौ०. नाथ कृपा करि पूँछेहु जैसैं । मानहु कहा क्रोध तजि तैसैं ॥ १ ॥
मिला जाइ जब अनुज तुम्हारा । जातहिं राम तिलक तेहि सारा ॥ २ ॥
रावन दूत हमहि सुनि काना । कपिन्ह बाँधि दीन्हें दुख नाना ॥ ३ ॥
श्रवन नासिका काटैं लागे । राम सपथ दीन्हें हम त्यागे ॥ ४ ॥
caupāī.

nātha krpā kari pūṁchēhu jaisēṁ. mānahu kahā krōdha taji taisēṁ. 1.
milā jā'i jaba anuja tumhārā. jātahiṁ rāma tilaka tēhi sārā. 2.
rāvana dūta hamahi suni kānā. kapinha bāṁdhi dīnhē dukha nānā. 3.
śravana nāsikā kāṭaiṁ lāgē. rāma sapatha dīnhēṁ hama tyāgē. 4.

Suk, the messenger-cum-spy, replied, 'Oh Lord! I prithee to not to become angry at me and listen to my submission with the same grace and kindness with which you have treated me heretofore, and have asked me to give you a truthful report about my personal experiences inside the enemy's camp. (1)

As soon as your younger brother (Vibhishan) met Lord Ram, the Lord welcomed him warmly by putting a Tilak mark on his forehead immediately (as a gesture of accepting him as one of his closest companions and anointing him as the future king of Lanka). (2)

Meanwhile, as soon as the monkeys heard that I was a messenger-cum-spy of Ravana¹, they pounced upon me and captured me; they tied me up and tormented me in different ways. (3)

They became ready to cut off my nose and ears, but when I pleaded for mercy in the name of Lord Ram, they let me off². (4)

[Note—¹And how did the monkeys come to know that this fellow was Ravana's spy? We have already read that when Suk, the spy, observed the kind treatment extended to Vibhishan by Lord Ram he was extremely amazed and overwhelmed with joy as he had not expected such a noble and warm reception of Vibhishan in an enemy's camp. He couldn't conceal his excitement and publicly exulted, expressing his feelings loudly, praising Lord Ram and the good luck of Vibhishan. This emotional outburst betrayed him, and the monkey guards immediately caught hold of him. Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 51—to Chaupai line no. 5 that precedes Doha no. 52.

²Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 6-7 that precede Doha no. 52.]

पूँछिहु नाथ राम कटकाई । बदन कोटि सत बरनि न जाई ॥ ५ ॥
 नाना बरन भालु कपि धारी । बिकटानन बिसाल भयकारी ॥ ६ ॥
 जेहिं पुर दहेउ हतेउ सुत तोरा । सकल कपिन्ह महुँ तेहि बलु थोरा ॥ ७ ॥
 अमित नाम भट कठिन कराला । अमित नाग बल बिपुल बिसाला ॥ ८ ॥

pūm̐chihu nātha rāma kaṭakā'ī. badana kōṭi sata barani na jā'ī. 5.
 nānā barana bhālu kapi dhārī. bikaṭānana bisāla bhayakārī. 6.
 jēhiṁ pura dahē'u hatē'u suta tōrā. sakala kapinha maham̐ tēhi balu thōrā. 7.
 amita nāma bhaṭa kaṭhina karālā. amita nāga bala bipula bisālā. 8.

Oh Lord; you have asked me about the army of Lord Ram. Well, let me then tell you frankly what I had observed. Forsooth, if I had a thousand mouths I wouldn't be able to fully describe this army—its formidable strength, its astounding numbers, its extreme enthusiasm, zeal and courage, its unrestrained energy and intense dynamism, and this boisterous army is raring to go to battle instantly. (5)

The army consisting of monkeys and bears have warriors of many forms and complexions that I wot naught how to describe. All of them have terrible and ferocious visages; their faces and bodies are fear-inspiring in as much as they are huge and deadly terrifying to look at. (6)

To give you an idea of the might of this army, recall the monkey who had burnt the city (of Lanka) and had killed your son (Akshay Kumar)—well, his strength is very much less as compared to the rest of his companions in the army. [To wit, he seemed to be a junior member of the army; I found him quite docile and orderly as compared to his peers who were all wild and ferocious in their talks and demeanours.] (7)

The warriors have so many names and are so countless in numbers that it is not possible to tell you much about them, except giving you a general picture. But one thing is definitely certain—and it is that they are extremely powerful, strong, ferocious and terrible, having unmatched strength and powers that are equivalent to innumerable war-elephants. (8)

दो०. द्विबिद मयंद नील नल अंगद गद बिकटासि ।
दधिमुख केहरि निसठ सठ जामवंत बलरासि ॥ ५४ ॥

dōhā.

dvivida mayanda nīla nala aṅgada gada bikaṭāsi.
dadhimukha kēhari nisathā saṭha jāmavanta balarāsi. 54.

I remember the name of some of these great warriors—they are Dwivida, Mayand, Neel, Nal, Angad, Gada, Vikataasya, Dadhimukha, Kehari, Nisatha, Satha, Jamvant etc.¹

All of them, without exception, are very powerful, valiant and strong. (Doha no. 54)

[Note—¹Nal and Neel were great architects and engineers; they were instrumental in getting the bridge constructed across the surface of the ocean—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 60; Lanka Kand, Chaupai line nos. 1-2 that precede Doha no. 2.

²Angad was the prince of Kishkindha and a nephew of its king Sugriv; he was the son of Baali, the elder brother of Sugriv. At the time of his death, Baali had put his son Angad in the protection of Lord Ram, making the Lord his guardian. Apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Kishkindha Kand, Chanda line nos. 7-8 that precede Doha no. 10.

³Jamvant was the chief of the bear community; he was old and very wise. It is believed that Brahma, the creator, had assumed this form when all the gods decided to come down to earth in the form of monkeys and bears to serve Lord Vishnu, who himself had come down as Lord Ram.]

चौ०. ए कपि सब सुग्रीव समाना । इन्ह सम कोटिन्ह गनइ को नाना ॥ १ ॥
राम कृपाँ अतुलित बल तिन्हहीं । तून समान त्रैलोकहि गनहीं ॥ २ ॥
अस मैं सुना श्रवन दसकंधर । पदुम अठारह जूथप बंदर ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

ē kapi saba sugrīva samānā. inha sama kōṭinha gana'i kō nānā. 1.
rāma kṛpām'atulita bala tinahīṁ. tūna samāna trailōkahi ganahīṁ. 2.
asa mairi sunā śravana dasakandhara. paduma aṭhāraha jūthapa bandara. 3.

The few chiefs whom I have named heretofore are like Sugriv, who is the king of the monkeys and of the kingdom of Kishkindha. But I have named only a few, for there

are so many countless others of whom I ought naught about; I had limited time and limited access, so obviously I could not gather more information about the Lord's expansive army (because I was caught very soon). (1)

By the grace and blessing of Lord Ram, they have acquired astounding strength and stupendous valour so much so that they treat the entire universe, consisting of three divisions (known as the heaven, the earth and the nether world), as if it was inconsequential as a blade of humble grass.

[To wit, they have no fear of any power in the world, no matter how majestic and strong it is. They are confident that they can easily pluck it and throw it away, or squash and rub it under foot like one does to an ordinary blade of grass or a small twig that comes in the way.] (2)

Oh the ten-headed One (Ravana; “dasakandhara”)! I have heard it being said that there are as many as eighteen thousand billion commanders of the monkey and bear army. [So just imagine: if this is the amazing number of commanders, then how many soldiers might actually be there in the army!] (3)

नाथ कटक महँ सो कपि नाहीं । जो न तुम्हहि जीतै रन माहीं ॥ ४ ॥
परम क्रोध मीजहिं सब हाथा । आयसु पै न देहिं रघुनाथा ॥ ५ ॥

nātha kaṭaka maham̐ sō kapi nāhīm̐. jō na tumhahi jītai rana māhīm̐. 4.
parama krōdha mījahim̐ saba hāthā. āyasu pai na dēhim̐ raghunāthā. 5.

Oh Lord; in my view there is not a single warrior in the army of monkeys and bears who is not capable of vanquishing you single-handed in the battle-field if he is afforded a chance to do so¹. (4)

The commanders and the warriors are very angry and restless; they are wringing their hands in excess of wrath, eager and raring to launch an immediate offensive to conquer Lanka. But they are constrained only because Lord Ram is not granting them his permission. (5)

[Note—¹Surely, this single statement must have sounded very offensive and insulting to Ravana, coming as it did from one of his own demons and a close confidante, and in front of the whole demon court. It acted as the spark that lit the fuse of Ravana's anger, and as we shall see soon that he was so extremely peeved and exasperated by Suk's speech and relentless praise of Lord Ram that finally he kicked the latter viciously in disgust—apropos: Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 57 herein below.

सोषहिं सिंधु सहित झष ब्याला । पूरहिं न त भरि कुधर बिसाला ॥ ६ ॥
मर्दि गर्द मिलवहिं दससीसा । ऐसेइ बचन कहहिं सब कीसा ॥ ७ ॥
गर्जहिं तर्जहिं सहज असंका । मानहुँ ग्रसन चहत हहिं लंका ॥ ८ ॥

sōṣaḥiṁ sindhu sahita jhaṣa byālā. pūrahiṁ na ta bhari kudhara bisālā. 6.
mardi garda milavahiṁ dasasīsā. aisē'i bacana kahahiṁ saba kīsā. 7.
garjahiṁ tarjahiṁ sahaja asaṅkā. mānahuṁ grasana cahata hahiṁ laṅkā. 8.

They are confidently saying: 'We will dry up the ocean with all its fish and other marine creatures; or we shall fill it up with huge rocks and boulders (to block its flow and create a bridge across it, or completely annihilate its existence by creating an artificial land mass where the ocean presently exists; we would change the geography and topography of earth if the need arises). (6)

We would squeeze and crush the ten-headed Ravana, contemptuously reducing him to dust.' Oh Lord, such are the words spoken boldly by all the monkey and bear warriors whom I had heard. (7)

All the warriors, who are fearless by nature, are shouting and roaring violently as if they would devour Lanka at the first available opportunity. (8)

दो०. सहज सूर कपि भालु सब पुनि सिर पर प्रभु राम ।
रावन काल कोटि कहूँ जीति सकहिं संग्राम ॥ ५५ ॥

dōhā.

sahaja sūra kapi bhālu saba puni sira para prabhu rāma.
rāvana kāla kōṭi kahūṁ jīti sakahiṁ saṅgrāma. 55.

All the monkeys and bears are born warriors having immense courage, valour, strength and abilities. Besides that, they have the mighty and all-able Lord Ram over their heads to extend his patronage and protection to them.

So this combination is simply formidable, making it possible for them to vanquish not only a single Ravana but even millions of Kaals (the gods of death) themselves should they decide to do so¹. (Doha no. 55)

[Note—¹The monkeys and bears are exceptionally powerful in their own right, but now they have the additional support and blessing of Lord Ram who is their Lord and patron. This makes them warriors absolutely invincible and the most powerful fighting force in this creation; they can overcome millions of death gods simultaneously, what to talk about a single demon king named Ravana!]

चौ०. राम तेज बल बुधि बिपुलाई । सेष सहस सत सकहिं न गाई ॥ १ ॥
सक सर एक सोषि सत सागर । तव भ्रातहि पूँछेउ नय नागर ॥ २ ॥
तासु बचन सुनि सागर पाहीं । मागत पंथ कृपा मन माहीं ॥ ३ ॥

caupāī.

rāma tēja bala budhi bipulāī. sēṣa sahasa sata sakahiṁ na gāī. 1.
saka sara ēka sōṣi sata sāgara. tava bhrātahi pūṁchē'u naya nāgara. 2.

tāsu bacana suni sāgara pāhīm. māgata pantha krpā mana māhīm. 3.

Lord Ram's majesty, glory and greatness, his might, strength and powers, as well as his intelligence, wisdom and erudition are so amazing and stupendous that even with a thousand heads (or mouths) Lord Sheshnath, the legendary serpent who is believed to hold the earth aloft on his thousand hoods, will be unable to narrate them. (1)

The Lord is capable of drying up thousands of oceans with a single arrow of his, yet, out of courtesy, civility and good manners, and also because he is an expert in following the laws of probity and propriety, he has sought your brother's (i.e. Vibhishan's) opinion regarding the question of how to cross the ocean¹. (2)

Hearing his (Vibhishan's) advice, the Lord is presently requesting the ocean to give him a passage across its surface². (3)

[Note—¹Lord Ram could have soaked the water of the ocean by shooting a single fiery arrow at it, but he wishes to follow a more reconciliatory path by trying to first find out a way to cross the ocean without any use of force. Besides this, the Lord chose to consult Vibhishan on this issue to show due respect to him as he had appointed the latter as his close minister and advisor with respect to the impending campaign of Lanka.

The Lord wanted to keep the patron Deity of the ocean in good humour to ensure that the backyard is a safe place once the war begins in Lanka, because once the Lord's army lands on the soil of Lanka the ocean would be in the rear, separating the army from the mainland. No wise and intelligent military general would ever want a hostile force in the backyard of his army. In case an emergency arose and a quick withdrawal was needed for the Lord's army, a friendly ocean would be of great help as opposed to the situation when the ocean is inimical and willing to settle its own scores with the Lord as it feels that it had been humiliated and subjected to ruthless force earlier. So the Lord wished to be on good and friendly terms with the ocean by giving the latter a chance to let his army pass peacefully, in a friendly manner. Use of unwarranted force would not be conducive to a wise military strategy, as well as for establishing and maintaining long term amiable relations.

²Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 3 that precedes Doha no. 50—to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 51.]

सुनत बचन बिहसा दससीसा । जौं असि मति सहाय कृत कीसा ॥ ४ ॥

सहज भीरु कर बचन दृढ़ाई । सागर सन ठानी मचलाई ॥ ५ ॥

मूढ़ मृषा का करसि बड़ाई । रिपु बल बुद्धि थाह मैं पाई ॥ ६ ॥

सचिव सभीत बिभीषन जाकें । बिजय बिभूति कहाँ जग ताकें ॥ ७ ॥

sunata bacana bihasā dasasīsā. jaurṁ asi mati sahāya kṛta kīsā. 4.

sahaja bhīru kara bacana dṛṛhā'ī. sāgara sana ṭhānī macalā'ī. 5.

mūṛha mṛṣā kā karasi baṛā'ī. ripu bala bud'dhi thāha mairṁ pā'ī. 6.

saciva sabhīta bibhīṣana jākēm. bijaya bibhūti kahām' jaga tākēm. 7.

When the ten-headed Ravana heard what Suk had to say, he laughed in a derisive manner, saying ‘With this sort of low intelligence there is no wonder that he (Lord Ram) has chosen to make monkeys as his allies and supporters. (4)

What an irony it is that he (Lord Ram) has sought the advice of Vibhishan who himself is cowardly, and has decided to follow the latter’s advice by meekly praying to the ocean (like a child seeking favour from someone) in an attempt to make it agree, something that is impossible. (5)

Oh you dumb-witted wicked fellow; why are you falsely praising him (Lord Ram)? Listen, I have been able to measure how strong and powerful the enemy is on the basis of your own version of the developments. (6)

Say, someone who has a cowardly and frightened person like Vibhishan as his advisor and minister, how can he ever expect to have the glory of victory for himself, how can he ever hope to have the crown of triumph over his head? [No, it is not at all possible.]² (7)

[Note—¹Ravana alludes to Lord Ram praying to the ocean to let his army pass to the other side. He means that a brave and valiant warrior would forcefully remove all obstacles that stand in his way, not plead meekly before his opponent to let him move ahead. From Ravana’s perspective, had Lord Ram been brave and capable as he is reputed to be, and also as Suk has himself so lavishly praised him to be, then why is he not subduing the ocean by use of force instead of wasting time praying like a humble man, fully knowing that the ocean would not yield as it is very stubborn. This clearly indicates that Lord Ram is trying to avoid a confrontation, and is looking out to find an excuse as he is uncertain of its outcome.

Ravana felt that perhaps Lord Ram is making the ocean a scapegoat, as an excuse to tell everybody that he could not win Lanka and conquer its king Ravana just because the ocean would not give passage to his army to cross over to Lanka and wage a war. It implies that he lacks confidence and is not sure of a win, putting the blame for his abandoning the Lanka campaign on the head of the ocean—for the ocean stood in the way and did not let him pass. Well, why can’t Lord Ram show his mettle and grit in the first instance by overcoming the obstacle of the ocean if he talks so much of defeating the demon army that is a much more difficult task than subduing the ocean? Surely, there is more bluster and hollow talk than something concrete in all the claims he makes about his abilities and powers.

²Ravana means that he is now sure that Lord Ram would never win against him because he has chosen to make Vibhishan as his advisor and war minister. Why? It is because he knows how simple-hearted and docile Vibhishan is, how scared he is of facing his elder brother Ravana, and how his nature is of a peaceful type instead of being aggressive and confrontationist that foster war-like conditions. This is because Vibhishan is his younger brother, and no one would know more about Vibhishan’s nature and inclinations and habits than his own elder brother Ravana.]

सुनि खल बचन दूत रिस बाढ़ी । समय बिचारि पत्रिका काढ़ी ॥ ८ ॥

रामानुज दीन्ही यह पाती । नाथ बचाइ जुड़ावहु छाती ॥ ९ ॥

बिहसि बाम कर लीन्ही रावन । सचिव बोलि सठ लाग बचावन ॥ १० ॥

sunī khala bacana dūta risa bārḥī. samaya bicāri patrikā kārḥī. 8.
rāmānuja dīnhī yaha pātī. nātha bacā'i jurāvahu chātī. 9.
bihasi bāma kara līnhī rāvana. saciva bōli saṭha lāga bacāvana. 10.

Hearing haughty words of the wicked fellow (Ravana), the messenger's lost his cool as his anger was further stoked¹, and feeling that the time was now appropriate, he indignantly took out the letter of warning that Laxman had given to him for Ravana. (8)

He said scornfully, 'See, the younger brother of Lord Ram ("rāmānuja"; Laxman) has given me this note for you. Oh Lord, first read it (or get it read by someone), and then try to cool down and comfort your heart (i.e. realise the gravity of the situation if you think I am lying to you)².' (9)

Ravana received the letter with a show of contempt: he smirked sarcastically and took the letter by his left hand³. Then he summoned his minister and ordered him to read it aloud. (10)

[Note—¹Why was the messenger's anger stoked; why did he become indignant? It is because Ravana had called him a 'liar'—apropos Chaupai line no. 6 herein above. Suk was giving an honest report like a true spy, but instead of thanking him for gathering vital information and giving an honest opinion about the situation that existed on the ground so that proper action can be initiated, Ravana chose to rebuke him, calling him a virtual traitor and a liar just because he was praising his enemy even though what Suk said was nothing but the truth.

²Suk said "Look; you think I am telling you a bunch of lies. Here is a missive from Laxman; read it yourself or get it read by someone. Then you will realise the gravity of the matter.

³Good manners expect that a person receives a letter from someone with his right hand, instead of the left hand. Receiving someone's letter by the left hand is a gesture that implies that the recipient of the letter holds the sender in great contempt.]

दो०. बातन्ह मनहि रिझाइ सठ जनि घालसि कुल खीस ।
राम बिरोध न उबरसि सरन बिष्नु अज ईस ॥ ५६ (क) ॥
की तजि मान अनुज इव प्रभु पद पंकज भृंग ।
होहि कि राम सरानल खल कुल सहित पतंग ॥ ५६ (ख) ॥

dōhā.

bātanha manahi rijhā'i saṭha jani ghālasī kula khīsa.
rāma birōdha na ubarasi sarana biṣṇu aja īsa. 56 (a).
kī taji māna anuja iva prabhu pada paṅkaja bhṛṅga.

hōhi ki rāma sarānala khala kula sahita pataṅga. 56 (b).

This letter read as follows: “Oh you dumb-witted and wicked fellow! Don’t cheat yourself and become a cause of ruin of your race by living in a fool’s paradise and trying to fool yourself by imaginary good times and happy tidings by living in an artificial world of colourful dreams!

Face reality and remember this: by being inimical to Lord Ram you will not be able to save yourself even if you go to seek shelter with the powerful Gods of the Trinity, i.e. Brahma the creator, Vishnu the sustainer, and Shiva the concluder of this creation¹. (Doha no. 56-a)

Alternatively (if you wish to actually save yourself and your race from complete annihilation), discard your sense of false pride and arrogance, and come to seek refuge at the feet of Lord Ram like your younger brother (Vibhishan) has wisely done. Become a devotee of the Lord like a bee is of the lotus flower².

Oh you evil fellow! Otherwise, you and your race will be roasted alive in the fire unleashed by the angry arrows of Lord Ram.

[To wit, the choice is yours: Either face annihilation by opposing Lord Ram, or seek redemption and eternal happiness by surrendering before the Lord.] (Doha no. 56-b)”

[Note—¹The same warning was given to Ravana by Hanuman earlier in Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 8 that precedes Doha no. 23.

On both the occasions, however, he did not pay attention.

²The honey bee is so enamoured of the lotus flower and devoted to it that it hovers over it, longing to alight and drink its nectar. Likewise, a devotee of Lord Ram always thinks of worshipping the Lord and fixes his attention on the holy feet of the Lord, as this bestows great bliss, happiness and joy to him.]

चौ०. सुनत सभय मन मुख मुसुकाई । कहत दसानन सबहि सुनाई ॥ १ ॥

भूमि परा कर गहत अकासा । लघु तापस कर बाग बिलासा ॥ २ ॥

caupāī.

sunata sabhaya mana mukha musukāī. kahata dasānana sabahi sunāī. 1.

bhūmi parā kara gahata akāsā. laghu tāpasa kara bāga bilāsā. 2.

Ravana felt sore affright internally, but he laughed to hide his consternations, fears and worries, and putting up a bold face as if all was well and he is not at all concerned, he addressed everyone present and said scornfully [1], ‘Just like someone lying prostrate on the ground raises his hand and closes his fists to pretend that he is grasping the sky with his hands, this message from the younger hermit (i.e. Laxman) is nothing but an extension of his pretentious boast and loud bluster encapsulated in a fiery speech [2].’ (1-2)

कह सुक नाथ सत्य सब बानी । समुझहु छाड़ि प्रकृति अभिमानी ॥ ३ ॥

सुनहु बचन मम परिहरि क्रोधा । नाथ राम सन तजहु बिरोधा ॥ ४ ॥

kaha suka nātha satya saba bānī. samujhahu chāḍi prakṛti abhimānī. 3.
sunahu bacana mama parihari krōdhā. nātha rāma sana tajahu birōdhā. 4.

Suk replied, ‘Oh Lord (nātha); abandon your inherently stubborn and proud nature, become serious in this matter, and treat what is being said as the truth. (3)

Oh Lord (nātha)! Discard your anger and listen to my good advice: abandon your confrontation with Lord Ram and stop being hostile to him. [Be prudent and wise; arrogance and haughtiness will not serve any purpose for you.] (4)

अति कोमल रघुबीर सुभाऊ । जद्यपि अखिल लोक कर राऊ ॥ ५ ॥

मिलत कृपा तुम्ह पर प्रभु करिही । उर अपराध न एकउ धरिही ॥ ६ ॥

जनकसुता रघुनाथहि दीजे । एतना कहा मोर प्रभु कीजे ॥ ७ ॥

ati kōmala raghubīra subhā'ū. jadyapi akhila lōka kara rā'ū. 5.
milata kṛpā tumha para prabhu karihī. ura aparādha na ēka'u dharihī. 6.
janakasutā raghunāthahi dijē. ētanā kahā mōra prabhu kijē. 7.

Lord Ram's nature is extremely graceful, kind and polite, though he is the Lord Emperor of the entire creation. (5)

Be rest assured that as soon as you go and meet the Lord, he would grant his mercy to you; he would grace you; he would bestow his kindness upon you in abundance. Be sure that the Lord would not harbour a single whit of your sins in his heart (as he warmly welcomes and embraces you). (6)

Oh Lord (prabhu)! Please be gracious and kind enough to oblige me by doing one simple thing that I sincerely advise you—and it is to give Janki (Sita, the daughter of Janak) back to Lord Raghunath (Lord Ram).’ (7)

जब तेहिं कहा देन बैदेही । चरन प्रहार कीन्ह सठ तेही ॥ ८ ॥

नाइ चरन सिरु चला सो तहाँ । कृपासिंधु रघुनायक जहाँ ॥ ९ ॥

jaba tēhim kahā dēna baidēhī. carana prahāra kīnha saṭha tēhī. 8.
nā'i carana siru calā sō tahām'. kṛpāsindhu raghunāyaka jahām'. 9.

When Ravana was told by Suk, the messenger, to give Janki (Sita) back to Lord Ram, he lost his temper; that vile fellow vented his ire on Suk by kicking him contemptuously¹. (8)

Suk bowed his head before Ravana and immediately left the place (Ravana's court and the city of Lanka) to go where Lord Ram was². (9)

[Note—¹This is the second time Ravana has kicked one of his close associates when he was advised to give Sita back to her husband, Lord Ram. The first instance was when he had kicked his own brother Vibhishan—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41.

²Once again we find that Vibhishan too had done the same thing: when kicked by Ravana he had also bowed before him and immediately left Lanka to go and meet Lord Ram—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line no. 6 that precedes Doha no. 41 to Chaupai line no. 1 that precedes Doha no. 43.

Thus we observe that even before the actual war commenced, Ravana had lost two of his friends and well-wishers, first Vibhishan and now Suk, due to his haughty, stubborn and angry nature.]

करि प्रनामु निज कथा सुनाई । राम कृपाँ आपनि गति पाई ॥ १० ॥
 रिषि अगस्ति कीं साप भवानी । राछस भयउ रहा मुनि ग्यानी ॥ ११ ॥
 बंदि राम पद बारहिं बारा । मुनि निज आश्रम कहूँ पगु धारा ॥ १२ ॥

kari pranāmu nija kathā sunāī. rāma kṛpām āpani gati pāī. 10.
 riṣi agasti kīm sāpa bhavānī. rāchasa bhaya'u rahā muni gyānī. 11.
 bandi rāma pada bārahim bārā. muni nija āśrama kahum pagu dhārā. 12.

When he reached Lord Ram's camp he reverentially bowed his head before the Lord to pay his obeisance to him, and then told him all about himself by way of an introduction. The Lord blessed him, and he attained the destiny that he deserved. [What was Suk's fate? It is outlined in the following verse.] (10)

In his previous life he was a wise, erudite and enlightened hermit, but unfortunately he had become a demon due to a curse cast on him by another sage named Agastya¹. (11)

When Lord Ram blessed him (Suk), the latter was freed from this curse. After that, the sage expressed his gratitude to Lord Ram by bowing his head repeatedly before the Lord, and then he went back to his old hermitage. (12)

[Note—¹What probable reason could have been for sage Agastya cursing Suk? Perhaps Suk may have very proud of his knowledge and erudition, and on some occasion he might have done something or behaved in some way that had offended sage Agastya. Annoyed thus, Agastya may have cursed him as a punishment to become a demon. Then Suk may have asked for pardon, whereupon sage Agastya must have blessed him that some day he would be freed from this curse when he meets Lord Ram and has the good fortune of being graced by the Lord himself.]

दो०. बिनय न मानत जलधि जड़ गए तीनि दिन बीति ।
 बोले राम सक्रोध तब भय बिनु होइ न प्रीति ॥ ५७ ॥
 dōhā.

binaya na mānata jaladhi jaṛa ga'ē tīni dina bīti.
bōlē rāma sakōpa taba bhaya binu hō'i na prīti. 57.

Meanwhile, the stupid Ocean was so dumb and stubborn that it did not pay any whit of attention to Lord Ram's prayers to allow the Lord a passage across it even though three days had passed.

Exasperated by the Ocean's arrogance, Lord Ram angrily exclaimed, 'It appears that there would be no peaceful and friendly way out of this predicament; there is no option left but of taking recourse to an action that would create fear for the Ocean¹. (Doha no. 57)

[Note—¹Lord Ram knew, in the very beginning itself, that he would have to ultimately use force to make the ocean give him a passage: this is evident by the answer the Lord gave to Laxman when the latter was not in favour of making humble pleadings to the ocean for passage, because it would be taken as a weakness on part of the Lord. But the Lord wanted to make sure that all peaceful means are exhausted before resorting to the use of force. So he had then assured Laxman that his wishes of using force will be fulfilled, but he ought to wait patiently for a while. {Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-7 that precede Doha no. 51.}]

चौ०. लछिमन बान सरासन आनू । सोषौं बारिधि बिसिख कृसानू ॥ १ ॥
सठ सन बिनय कुटिल सन प्रीती । सहज कृपन सन सुंदर नीती ॥ २ ॥
ममता रत सन ग्यान कहानी । अति लोभी सन बिरति बखानी ॥ ३ ॥
क्रोधिहि सम कामिहि हरि कथा । ऊसर बीज बाँ फल जथा ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

lachimana bāna sarāsana ānū. sōṣaum bāridhi bisikha kṛsānū. 1.
saṭha sana binaya kuṭila sana prīti. sahaja kṛpana sana sundara nīti. 2.
mamatā rata sana gyāna kahānī. ati lōbhī sana birati bakhānī. 3.
krōdhihi sama kāmīhi hari kathā. ūsara bīja ba'ēm' phala jathā. 4.

Lord Ram said angrily, 'Laxman; bring my bow and arrows. I shall dry up this ocean with my fiery arrows¹. (1)

[Now the Lord lays down some wonderful principles of prudence that can serve as guidelines to help us deal with the people of the world and the difficulty we face in making the right decision regarding how to deal with a particular situation and people of specific character and nature. Here he lists seven special characters of people, and tells us how to deal with them.]

Praying or making supplication before an idiot (saṭha sana binaya), making friendship with a scoundrel and having affection for an evil rogue (kuṭila sana prīti), teaching good virtues of liberality, charity, generosity and philanthropy to someone who is a born miser and exceedingly thrifty (sahaja kṛpana sana sundara nīti) [2],

--- Preaching spirituality and its eclectic principles that lead to wisdom, self-realisation and enlightenment to someone who is deeply passionate and engrossed in worldly affairs (*mamatā rata sana gyāna kahānī*), lecturing on the virtues of renunciation, detachment and dispassion to one who is exceptionally greedy and rapacious (*ati lōbhī sana birati bakhānī*) [3], ---

--- Attempting to inculcate the virtues of calmness and evenness of the mind and emotions to someone who is prone to anger, easily becoming wrathful and vehement (*krōdhihi samā*), and to narrate the divine stories of Lord Hari (Lord God) to one who is overcome with lust and passion (*kāmihi hari kathā*)—well, all these (seven) things are like trying to sow seed and expect it to sprout in a land that is infertile, dry and barren (*ūsara bīja ba'ēm̐ phala jathā*) [4]².’ (2-4)

[Note—¹Lord Ram threatened the ocean in these words: “I shall teach the deity of this ocean, which is stubborn and stupid, a good lesson of his life by shooting energised arrows at him. These arrows are unique and exceptionally ferocious by their inherent nature inasmuch as that they are presided over by the fire god, resulting in their target bearing the brunt of the wrath of the fire god, which simply means that anything at which these arrows are shot is reduced to ash in an instant. Since the ocean is a reservoir of water and can’t logically be turned to ash, it means that it will immediately be dried up, and its bed exposed in the form of a cracked and parched stretch of dessert land.”

Lord Ram actually did not want to carry out his threat because the Lord, who himself is an ‘ocean’ of mercy and compassion, was well aware that by drying up the ocean he would be killing all the marine creatures for whom the ocean is their home. Surely and certainly this cruel action was not in the nature of the Lord; his main intention was to instil fear in the heart of the ocean so that it agrees, albeit under the threat of extinction, to let the Lord’s army cross over to the other side and land on the shores of Lanka. That was all, and no real harm was intended.

²In these analogies, the ‘negative traits’ are like the dry and infertile land, while the ‘positive virtues’ are like the seed that sprouts into a flowering plant.

To wit, just as it is worthless to expect a seed to sprout and produce a beautiful flowering plant if it is sowed in an infertile and dry piece of land, so it is also useless to expect any good result by trying to attempt any of the things listed in these verses.

For instance, if one expects that an idiot would understand one’s situation and heed to his prayers for help, then he himself is an idiot because one is sure to be frustrated in his attempt. Similarly, it is dangerous to have friendship with someone who is crooked and vile; there is no use in trying to make a miserly person loosen his purse string and make donations or help others monetarily; a passionate man who enjoys worldly pleasures and who is deeply engrossed in sensual matters would turn a deaf ear and a blind eye when told about spiritual matters, its wonderful values and its principles of renunciation, detachment and dispassion along with the bliss, joy and peace they provide; an angry person would not listen to reasoning; and a worldly man for whom this gross material world is the real thing, talk of Lord God as well as of love and devotion for him is a boring subject.]

अस कहि रघुपति चाप चढ़ावा । यह मत लछिमन के मन भावा ॥ ५ ॥

संधानेउ प्रभु बिसिख कराला । उठी उदधि उर अंतर ज्वाला ॥ ६ ॥
 मकर उरग झष गन अकुलाने । जरत जंतु जलनिधि जब जाने ॥ ७ ॥
 कनक थार भरि मनि गन नाना । बिप्र रूप आयउ तजि माना ॥ ८ ॥

asa kahi raghupati cāpa caṛhāvā. yaha mata lachimana kē mana bhāvā. 5.
 sandhānē'u prabhu bisikha karālā. uṭhī udadhi ura antara jvālā. 6.
 makara uraga jhaṣa gana akulānē. jarata jantu jalanidhi jaba jānē. 7.
 kanaka thāra bhari mani gana nānā. bipra rūpa āya'u taji mānā. 8.

Saying this, Lord Raghupati (Lord Sri Ram) mounted his arrow on the bow. This attitude of the Lord found favour with Laxman, and he greatly appreciated it¹. (5)

When the Lord mounted his fiery, ferocious arrow on the bow and raised it (to shoot), there arose a great turbulence in the heart (middle) of the ocean.

[To wit, there was a sudden churning, bubbling and frothing of the water of the ocean. It appeared that a huge underwater volcano had suddenly erupted, making the ocean boil; or it was like a huge underwater quake that seemed to lift the ocean and split it into two, causing monstrous waves that replicated the scene of the doom's day.] (6)

All the marine creatures, such as alligators, sea-serpents and fish of all varieties, were immensely vexed and agitated (by the unexpected churn and the sudden turmoil).

The Deity of the ocean became alarmed and thought that all the creatures who inhabit its realm (i.e. who live in the ocean) would be severely scalded and boiled alive. (7)

To prevent a catastrophe from happening, it (Deity of the ocean) decided to approach Lord Ram and make peace with him. So it collected a large assortment of gems and precious stones found in the ocean (such as pearls, shells and corals etc.), arranged them in a golden plate, and having abandoned all its haughtiness and ego, it came out on the surface of the ocean in the form of a Brahmin². (8)

[Note—¹Refer: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Chaupai line nos. 2-4 that precede Doha no. 51. Here Laxman had strongly expressed his reservations about an attempt to make the ocean give a passage by humbly praying to it for this purpose; he was in favour of a robust action, of forcing the deity of the ocean to submit to Lord Ram's orders rather than making humble supplications.

Laxman was of the view, and correctly so, that Lord Ram's wish to make a peaceful crossing by avoiding a confrontation with the deity of the ocean would be taken in the wrong light by the latter, for since the ocean is dumb-witted by nature it would regard the Lord's gracious nature and friendly gesture as a sign of weakness, and not of nobleness. Eventually, Laxman's views turned out to be correct.

²Why did the Deity of the ocean assume the form of a 'Brahmin' when it came out to make peace with Lord Ram? The Deity was so scared of Lord Ram that it did not want to take the risk of coming out in his original form, whatever that form was. So to ensure that Lord Ram would not punish him he assumed the form of a Brahmin, for a Brahmin is a respected person and usually receives a warm welcome.

This sudden capitulation of the ocean, which was so stubborn and unrelenting just a while ago, proves the truth of Lord Ram's observation in Doha no. 57 and Chaupai line no. 2 that follows it.]

दो०. काटेहिं पड़ कदरी फरड़ कोटि जतन कोउ सींच ।
बिनय न मान खगेस सुनु डाटेहिं पड़ नव नीच ॥ ५८ ॥

dōhā.

kāṭēhiṁ pa'i kadarī phara'i kōṭi jatana kō'u sīnca.
binaya na māna khagēsa sunu ḍaṭēhiṁ pa'i nava nīca. 58.

No matter what pains one may take to water a plantain tree in order to make it bear fruits, but it will not oblige. The only way to make the plantain tree to bear fruits is to cut or chop it down completely¹.

Oh the king of birds (khagēsa; Garud, the celestial Eagle who is the mount of Lord Vishnu)²! Listen to this maxim—those who are lowly and wicked do not mend their ways by polite prayers and requests; the only way to bring them around is to deal with them sternly and strongly admonish them for their behaviour. (Doha no. 58)

[Note—¹The banana tree bears fruits only once in its life cycle. No matter what care is given to its stem or roots, and how much water is showered on it, it would not bear fruits again. The only way to have a good harvest of banana fruit is to cut off the earlier tree and plant a new one. To wit, those who have a particular bad habit often do not break that habit unless they are severely punished for it.

²Garud was one of the primary listeners of this divine Story of Lord Ram. The narrator in his case was the saintly crow named Kaagbhusund. This episode of Kaagbhusund narrating the divine Story of Lord Ram, known as the 'Ram Charit Manas', is the subject matter of the second half of the last chapter the aforesaid Holy Book, i.e. from Uttar Kand, Chaupai line no. 2 that precedes Doha no. 58—to Doha no. 125.

A full English version of this wonderful narrative, known as the "Kaagbhusund Ramayan" that is soaked in spiritual wisdom and the virtues of devotion and love for Lord God, has been published by this author separately. It is available at the same site from where this current book the reader is reading presently was accessed.]

चौ०. सभय सिंधु गहि पद प्रभु केरे । छमहु नाथ सब अवगुन मेरे ॥ १ ॥
गगन समीर अनल जल धरनी । इन्ह कइ नाथ सहज जड़ करनी ॥ २ ॥
तव प्रेरित मायाँ उपजाए । सृष्टि हेतु सब ग्रंथनि गाए ॥ ३ ॥
प्रभु आयसु जेहि कहँ जस अहई । सो तेहि भाँति रहें सुख लहई ॥ ४ ॥

caupāī.

sabhaya sindhu gahi pada prabhu kērē. chamahu nātha saba avaguna mērē.

1.

gagana samīra anala jala dharanī. inha ka'i nātha sahaja jaṛa karanī. 2.
 tava prērita māyām upajā'ē. sṛṣṭi hētu saba granthani gā'ē. 3.
 prabhu āyasu jēhi kaham̐ jasa aha'ī. sō tēhi bhām̐ti rahēm sukha laha'ī. 4.

The terrified Deity of the ocean fell at the feet of Lord Ram, and clasping it with his hands he said, 'Oh Lord! Please be kind and gracious to excuse me for all my misdemeanours and faults. (1)

Oh Lord, the five elements, i.e. the sky, the wind, the water, the fire and the earth, are gross, thoughtless and dumb by their very nature¹. (2)

Every scripture affirms that it is your mystical and magical cosmic power known as 'Maya', i.e. the supernatural power that creates delusions of gigantic proportions, which is responsible for the creation of all these five gross elements for the purpose of creating this vast universe². (3)

Oh Lord! Since these elements were created to fulfil your wish (to create the world), they are obedient to you and faithfully follow the guidelines set for them by you. Since each and every single entity of this creation follows your wishes and obeys your instructions, doing aught naught which is contrary to what you desire keeps all of them happy and contented, and these five elements are no exception to this general rule. However, all problems and discontents arise when any of these entities attempt to violate this universal rule of conduct; all sorts of discord in any society or kingdom arise when the orders and authority of the realm's sovereign are undermined and individuals begin to act in their own way, heedless to the advice of their commanding authority (which in the case of this creation is you, the Supreme Lord).

Hence, one would do well and attain happiness in life if one is contented with where the Lord has placed him, and if one follows the instructions and wishes of the Lord³. (4)

[Note—¹To wit, their behaviour lacks finesse and delicacy; they are gross in their behaviour, thoughts and actions. Since the 'ocean' is a personified form of the 'water element', so it's but natural for it to be inherently gross and thoughtless. Therefore, oh Lord, you being merciful and considerate are requested to overlook the ocean's ill behaviour and stubbornness, and be kind to forgive it for its irreverent actions.

²To wit, these five elements are the basic building blocks for this creation. They were created by Maya, which is your supernatural cosmic power that enables you to create delusions of reality, which conjures up a surreal world of magic that is so wonderful and full of life, vibrancy and colour that even the wisest of sages are misled into believing it as being the real thing, whereas in fact it is just an imaginary dream-like world. This Maya, therefore, just in order to give effect to your wish to create an exceptionally fascinating creation of wondrous dimensions from virtually nothing, first created these five elements, viz. the sky, the air or the wind, the water, the fire and the earth, and then used them in myriads of permutations and combinations to craft the world as you wished.

It follows from this fact that since these five elements were created by Maya, i.e. the cosmic power of the Supreme Being to create delusions, they are 'gross, dull and inane' by themselves. They appear to be real and life-like just because the Lord himself wanted them to look as such just in the way a magician would like that he

creates on the stage should appear to be absolutely life-like and real, without a hint of falsehood, though he himself knows that they are all imaginary.

When the originator or creator of these five elements is Maya, the progenitor of grand delusions of cosmic proportions, and when this Maya has employed its powerful delusion-creating powers to create these five elements, then say how can it be expected that these five elements, and anything made from them, would have any truth or substance in them?

³To wit, these five elements stick to their basic nature ordained by you at the time of their creation. If they begin to do what they like themselves, if they do what they wish, then the order and regulatory mechanism in this universe would break down. I am sure you, being the Supreme Lord and Master of this world, would not like that your subordinates begin to do what they like, because that would create anarchy and chaos.

If they are not stubborn and act in a dumb manner by not relenting, not heeding to pleadings and not bowing to pressure tactics, then every powerful creature in this creation would brow-beat them to do their bidding. For instance, everyone would want the 'ocean' to part and give them a passage at their own convenience, or someone would want the ocean to rise and submerge his opponent's realm, or to freeze so that boats and ships can't move, and others would want it to irrigate their fields.

Similarly, someone would order the 'fire element' to burn his opponent, and someone would order the fire element to cool down so that his enemy can't cook food and die of hunger.

The earth may be ordered to dry up or shake to cause ruin and havoc for one's opponents. The sky may lose control over all its stars and planets, failing to act as a buffer between them, which in turn would mean that these stars and planets start colliding with each other. Imagine the hellish conditions of anarchy and chaos that would prevail if these five elements do not act stubbornly and adhere to their basic nature.

The subjects of any kingdom can live in peace and harmony and prosperity only if they respect their king and follow his laws; otherwise there would obviously be anarchy and chaos. This applies to all countries: the citizens are expected to follow the established constitution and laws of their country; there would be peace and harmony if this is practiced. Otherwise there would be constant friction between different sections of the society, leading to disharmony and tensions.

Similarly, the Supreme Being had laid down certain rules of behaviour and conduct for the five elements, which form the fundamental building-blocks of this creation, at the time of beginning of creation; these elements are expected to adhere to these rules and regulations in order to maintain peace and equilibrium in this creation. If they break this regulation, if they do what suits them, then there would be chaos all around. If these basic elements follow the norms laid out for them by the Supreme Being, then the overall structure of this creation as well as its finer constituents, which are formed out of these five elements, too would maintain their proper place, resulting in a peaceful existence. Otherwise, the structure would weaken and start crumbling from within.]

प्रभु भल कीन्ह मोहि सिख दीन्ही । मरजादा पुनि तुम्हरी कीन्ही ॥ ५ ॥

ढोल गवाँर सूद्र पसु नारी । सकल ताड़ना के अधिकारी ॥ ६ ॥

prabhu bhala kīnha mōhi sikha dīnhī. marajādā puni tumharī kīnhī. 5.
dhōla gavāmra sūdra pasu nārī. sakala tāḍaṇā kē adhikārī. 6.

Oh Lord (prabhu)! You have done the correct thing by teaching me a lesson (and I owe my thanks to you for it)¹. But the fact is that I was reluctant to give a passage across the water (of the ocean) because I did not wish to break the laws ordained by your own self; I was merely following the laws of conduct established for me and doing my duties². (5)

It is a established practice that a drum, one who is an utter fool, a lowly person, an animal, and a woman who has an evil character and a mean nature (like that of a lowly person or an animal)—these five entities deserve strictness in order to be tamed and taught good conduct³. (6)

[Note—¹What lesson did Lord Ram teach the Deity of the ocean? The Lord taught him that though it is okay that one should follow standard rules of conduct in routine life under ordinary circumstances, but one ought to be practical, prudent, wise and flexible enough in life to adjust and adapt oneself under changed circumstances, instead of being too rigid and stubborn.

For instance, though it was alright for the ocean not to allow anyone to cross over its surface, for that would break the law of Nature which had ordained that the surface of the ocean is different from the hard surface of the land, and though one could easily walk on the land one would be barred from walking over the surface of the water of the ocean or the river. The mass of solid earth known as ‘land’ does not drown anyone, and one can walk over it easily, but the mass of water known as an ‘ocean’ or a ‘river’ has the characteristic of drowning anyone who tries to walk over it barefoot like he does over the land. In order to go across the water of the ocean or river one needs a boat unlike in the case of the land where one can simply walk.

This is the normal law of Nature under ordinary circumstances. But the situation and circumstance here was different: if the ocean did not allow the army of Lord Ram to cross over it to the other side then it would be impossible for the Lord to free an innocent lady (Sita) who was kidnapped by a demonic person, and it would also prevent the Lord from carrying out his duty to restore peace and order in this world by eliminating the scourge of the evil demons who had run amok in this world, horrifying all the creatures, and creating terror and devastation everywhere.

In this peculiar situation, the stubbornness of the Ocean in not allowing Lord Ram to cross over its surface to go to Lanka to stop the demons from further spreading mayhem in this world was actually an act of the Ocean that was obstructing the Lord and creating hurdles in his path in carrying out his duties as the Supreme Lord of this creation. The Lord was not going to Lanka on a holiday, for a picnic or for pleasure. The Lord was on a divine mission of eliminating the evil and cruel demons, and obstructing him from carrying out his noble duties for the welfare of the world as a whole was a sinful act on the part of the Deity of the ocean. Therefore it was not pardonable, and the Lord, being the King Emperor of the world, had the right to punish the Ocean for being so stupid as to not understand the reality, and foolishly creating hurdles in the Lord’s path on the pretext of just following his natural character.

²The Ocean tried to explain his actions by pleading before the Lord that since it is an embodiment of the ‘water element’, it was ordained not to allow any creature who walks on foot on land to also walk over water in the same way. Hence, it was merely following the rule established for it by the Lord himself at the time of creation. The Ocean said ‘sorry’ and asked the Lord to forgive him.

³The word used in the verse is “tāḍaṇā”, which refers to the ‘use of force’ against anybody. The ‘drum’ needs to be ‘beaten’ or ‘struck’ or ‘hit’ by a stick in order to make it produce sound. If one touches it softly in order not to hurt it or be kind to it, then the drum would produce no sound. To wit, the ‘drum’ is so dumb that it requires a harsh treatment to produce desired results; treating it politely is useless.

If anyone is a complete fool then trying to make him do something sensible in a polite manner is a waste of time and energy. He needs stern words, constant strict vigil and the fear of punishment if one wants him to do anything worthwhile.

Similarly, a lowly person needs strictness if one expects him to be disciplined; showing politeness and being courteous with such persons would make them go wild with arrogance and get up on one’s nerves.

An animal is to be treated with strictness, and so is the case with a woman who is of an evil character.

It is interesting to note here that the word “pasu”, which means an animal, is strategically placed between “sūdra” and “nārī”, meaning a lowly person and a woman respectively. It implies that a lowly person and a woman who are “animal-like” in their mind and heart, whose intellect and behaviour are no less dumb and gross than that of an animal, surely deserve to be treated like one would treat an animal. They deserve harsh and strict treatment if one wants to keep them under leash.

Shakespeare has famously said regarding a woman in ‘Hamlet’: “Frailty thy name is woman”. These observations need not be taken in the wrong light as they are clearly meant for a woman who is ‘no better than an animal’ by her inherent nature.

Of course such ‘evil women’ are exceptions, and so are persons called ‘Sudras’ who are so ‘mean and lowly’ by nature that they are at the bottom of the rung in hierarchy of civil society, and these rules are meant only for such persons.]

प्रभु प्रताप मैं जाब सुखाई । उतरिहि कटकु न मोरि बड़ाई ॥ ७ ॥

प्रभु अग्या अपेल श्रुति गाई । करौं सो बेगि जो तुम्हहि सोहाई ॥ ८ ॥

prabhu pratāpa maim jāba sukhāī. utarihi kaṭaku na mōri baṛāī. 7.
prabhu agyā apēla śruti gāī. karaun sō bēgi jō tumhahi sōhāī. 8.

[The Ocean pleaded:] Oh Lord (prabhu)! Though it is true that I would be dried up if your majesty so wishes, and then the army of monkeys and bears would easily cross over to the other shore (i.e. reach Lanka by walking on my dried bed), but that would deprive me of a chance to get some glory of being able to be of some service to you! (7)

Your orders and instructions are sacrosanct and inviolable in this creation, so say the scriptures. Hence, I (and for that everyone else) am bound to obey you. So please be kind to instruct me regarding what pleases you, and what you expect me to do.’ (8)

[Note—The Deity of the ocean tells Lord Ram that he is at the Lord's command. The Lord should forgive him as all great Kings ought to be merciful, considerate and forgiving in their hearts. If the Lord decides to go ahead and punish the Ocean then it would not be good for the Lord's reputation. On the other hand, if the Lord shows mercy on the Ocean and gives him a chance to devise a device by means of which the Lord's army gets across it while letting the Ocean retain its dignity, form and status, then both would gain—the Lord's reputation as a merciful and gracious Lord would be enhanced further, and the Ocean would also feel happy that it could serve the Lord and help him fulfil his divine mission of getting rid of the demons who were tormenting the world.

So therefore it would be fit and proper if Lord Ram does not dry up the Ocean but allows it to form a strategy which would help the army of the Lord go across its surface without violating his dignity.]

दो०. सुनत बिनीत बचन अति कह कृपाल मुसुकाइ ।

जेहि बिधि उतरै कपि कटकु तात सो कहहु उपाइ ॥ ५९ ॥

dōhā.

sunata binīta bacana ati kaha krpāla musukā'i.

jēhi bidhi utarai kapi kaṭaku tāta sō kahahu upā'i. 59.

When the merciful Lord Ram heard these polite words of the Deity of the ocean, he smiled affectionately and replied, 'Alright; so be it. Now tell me a way by which the army of monkeys and bears can go to the other side.' (Doha no. 59)

[Note—Why did Lord Ram 'smile'? It was because only after he had threatened the Ocean with dire consequences that the latter had relented. By 'smiling' at the Ocean the Lord indicated that he had no actual animosity or rancour against the former in his heart, but was only showing superficial anger at the Ocean just in order to make him mend his ways, and stop being inveterately arrogant and stubborn. That was all, and the Lord did not actually intend to harm the Deity of the ocean in any material way.

Why would the Lord not actually harm the ocean by drying it up? It is because the Lord knew that the ocean harbours a rich culture of marine life, and being merciful by nature and protector of the world, the Lord would never imagine doing anything rash that would extinguish this life.]

चौ०. नाथ नील नल कपि द्वौ ज़ाई । लरिकाई रिषि आसिष पाई ॥ १ ॥

तिन्ह कें परस किऐँ गिरि भारे । तरिहहिं जलधि प्रताप तुम्हारे ॥ २ ॥

मैं पुनि उर धरि प्रभु प्रभुताई । करिहउँ बल अनुमान सहाई ॥ ३ ॥

एहि बिधि नाथ पयोधि बँधाइअ । जेहिं यह सुजसु लोक तिहुँ गाइअ ॥ ४ ॥

caupā'i.

nātha nīla nala kapi dvau bhā'i. larikā'īm riṣi āsiṣa pā'i. 1.

tinha kēm parasa ki'ēm giri bhārē. tarihahim jaladhi pratāpa tumhārē. 2.

mairṁ puni ura dhari prabhu prabhutā'ī. kariha'um̐ bala anumāna sahā'ī. 3.
ēhi bidhi nātha payōdhi bam̐dhā'i'a. jēhim̐ yaha sujasu lōka tihum̐ gā'i'a. 4.

[Reassured by the way Lord Ram politely and calmly received the Deity of the ocean and smiled affectionately at him, he felt very grateful to the Lord. Then he volunteered to help the Lord in the best way possible, a way that would maintain the sanctity of the laws of Nature and become a precedent for the coming generations. And what was that way? It was this:--]

The Deity of the ocean replied courteously, 'Oh Lord (nātha). Two monkeys named Nala and Neela had been granted a boon by a venerated sage during their childhood days. (1)

By the virtue of this boon as well as by your blessings, even huge boulders and rocks as large as hills and mountains would be able to float on the surface of the water of the ocean¹.

[Verily indeed, the world would see this miraculous deed as an evidence of your glory and mystical powers—for no one can ever imagine that huge and heavy rocks and boulders that resemble miniature mountains can ever float on the surface of the ocean; it is virtually impossible. Oh Lord, very few would know that this feat was achieved by these two monkey warriors also due to the boon that was granted to them by some ancient sage. The world would actually praise you and your mystical powers alone that enabled this stupendous feat to be achieved by them. So therefore, you can see that I am really helping to enhance your glory instead of reducing it.] (2)

Meanwhile, I too would eternally feel grateful to you in my heart for showing immense mercy and grace upon me, and I will do my best to help you in whatever way I can. (3)

Oh Lord (nātha). In this way you can get the ocean tamed by getting a bridge built across its surface. This method would establish your glory and majesty in all the three divisions of the world² for all times to come, and all future generations would be able to sing about it and glorify you for this remarkable act of yours.

[To wit, oh Lord, this would be win-win situation for both of us—for on the one hand it would help me to maintain my dignity and obey the laws of Nature by which it was ordained that land-bound living beings cannot walk on water, and on the other hand it would also help your Lordship's majesty and glory to reach greater heights. Further, it would help your army to cross the water easily, with the least trouble. It would also enable all the marine creatures living in the realm of the ocean to pay their obeisance to you and see your divine and holy form while you are crossing the ocean. This method of crossing the ocean would be in line with the human form that you have assumed, in spite of the fact that you are the Supreme Being having an all-pervading, omnipresent cosmic form.]³ (4)

[Note—¹The legend goes that Nala and Neela were sons of Vishwakarma, the architect of the gods in heaven. They had inherited their father's acumen in constructing great structures; they would be quietly helped by their father Vishwakarma himself once the construction of the bridge commenced. When they were young they used to be naughty, throwing idols worshipped by learned sages into the water. These sages knew who these two young monkey-boys were, and that when

they grow up they would one day help the Supreme Being proceed on his mission of eliminating the cruel demon race. Besides this they were very young in age, and the sages also knew that the monkeys are inherently mischievous and fond of creating nuisance. So they forgave Nala and Neela for their childish behaviour.

But since these two fellows continued with their deed of throwing the sages' idols into the water for the sake of fun, without realising the gravity and sinfulness of their deed, the sages devised a device by which they could protect their idols from sinking in the water—which was to pronounce a boon, by way of a curse, that all stone-like things (such as the idols) which Nala and Neela would touch will not sink but float on the surface of the water. So these idols never drowned, and they were recovered by the sages and reinstated in their hermitages.

This sort of 'curse' later on became a 'boon' for Nala and Neela, as it helped them to put together huge boulders and rocks to construct the bridge across which Lord Ram's army crossed over to Lanka!

²The three divisions of the world are heaven, earth and nether world.

³The Deity of the ocean is wise and intelligent, and not as dumb as he appeared to be! The way the Deity answered Lord Ram, and the reasoning he gives showing how they both would be gainers if the method advocated by him is implemented by the Lord, clearly proves his wisdom and prudence.

In the future, if anyone wished to cross a river or any other large water body then he would have a precedence to guide him what to do: he would have to construct a 'bridge' across the water.

This event of heavy rocks and boulders, which were definitely larger and heavier than ordinary wooden boats that were normally used to cross the water during those days, being able to 'float' on the water's surface also perhaps laid the foundation of the concept of building huge ships and water-crafts of gigantic proportions by future generations.]

एहिं सर मम उत्तर तट बासी । हतहु नाथ खल नर अघ रासी ॥ ५ ॥
सुनि कृपाल सागर मन पीरा । तुरतहिं हरी राम रनधीरा ॥ ६ ॥

ēhiṁ sara mama unāra taṭa bāsī. hatahu nātha khala nara agha rāsī. 5.
suni kṛpāla sāgara mana pīrā. turatahiṁ harī rāma ranadhīrā. 6.

On my northern coast or boarder (i.e. to my north; in the northern direction from here) there live certain very vile criminals who are a constant source of grief for me. So oh Lord, please be kind to exterminate them with your arrow (that you had mounted on your bow to punish me)¹. (5)

When the merciful Lord heard of the torments of the Ocean's heart, he was moved by pity at him. So taking cognizance of this, the graceful Lord who is valiant and steadfast in the battle-field immediately acted to dispel the troubles of the Ocean. [To wit, the Lord immediately shot the arrow in the direction indicated by the Deity of the ocean, and once the arrow was gone the ocean felt at ease as now there was no physical danger for it.] (6)

[Note—¹This verse is very interesting. We have read that Lord Ram had mounted his arrow on his bow to punish the Ocean before he appeared to plead for mercy and be forgiven. This arrow was still there, mounted on the bow! The Ocean felt terrified at the sight of this mounted arrow and was sore affright that if he does not tell the Lord of any target for this arrow then chances are that he himself would be one, for the Lord's arrow, once raised, cannot go in vain; it must be shot at something to dissipate its energy. So what ought to be done now?

By the term 'northern direction' or 'northern boarder', the Ocean means the land mass extending all the way up from the shore where Lord Ram met it till the fringes of the mighty Himalayan Mountain range which formed the extreme northern boundary of the known land mass of that era. There were many criminal tribes and demons who still lived there. So the Deity of the ocean requested Lord Ram to shoot his arrow in that direction so that it can eliminate such elements in the Ocean's backyard.

This request has great symbolic importance and significance—it means the Ocean reminded Lord Ram that while it is okay that he is going to Lanka to exterminate the demons who are sinful, cruel and vile to the extreme, but if this is the aim of the Lord then why should he neglect or ignore similar evil creatures still living in his own backyard, up in the main land? In Lanka only the worst of such demonic entities are concentrated, but others who may be less evil at present and who may one day evolve into evil forces similar to those who live presently in Lanka if they are not rooted out now are spread all over the north of the ocean. The Ocean reminded Lord Ram that it is a precautionary measure the Lord ought to take!

According to sage Valmiki's Ramayana, there was a place known as Droom-Kulya lying to the north of the ocean. That place was inhabited by low-caste people who were very sinful. The Ocean asked Lord Ram to shoot his arrow in that direction so that its explosive and fiery landing on the land would terrify these people, and they would think that the gods in heaven have shot this meteor at them to warn them to mend their sinful ways. There are good chances that it would suffice the purpose of reforming these sinful people. It is said that Lord Ram shot the arrow in the direction proposed by the Ocean, and the land got scorched, turning it into a desert known as 'Marukantar'. But since Lord Ram is kind and merciful in his heart, and since he wished to give the land and its people a chance for reformation, he blessed them that the land would be free from diseases, and that it would soon bear green trees that would have fruits on them. {Refer: Valmiki Ramayan, Lanka Kand, Canto 22, verse nos. 32-43.}

It is believed that this area is known as the Thar Desert and its surrounding areas in the present-day state of Rajasthan in India. In ancient times there was a huge cavity in the land, and it was filled with salt water to form a huge lagoon, or it could have been a fresh-water lake, a sort of an 'inland sea'. This lake or lagoon had a narrow water-channel linking it to the present-day Arabian Sea, that in turn merged with its parent body known as the 'Ocean' which was where Lord Ram now stood, on the southern tip of the mainland India.]

देखि राम बल पौरुष भारी । हरषि पयोनिधि भयउ सुखारी ॥ ७ ॥

सकल चरित कहि प्रभुहि सुनावा । चरन बंदि पाथोधि सिधावा ॥ ८ ॥

dēkhi rāma bala pauraṣa bhārī. haraṣi payōnidhi bhaya'u sukhārī. 7.
sakala carita kahi prabhuhi sunāvā. carana bandi pāthōdhi sidhāvā. 8.

When the Deity of the ocean observed the might and valour of Lord Ram (as well as the Lord's readiness to oblige him and adopt a friendly attitude towards him), he felt extremely glad and exhilarated in his heart. (7)

Then after narrating the whole story to the Lord (regarding the evil doings of the inhabitants of his northern borders as well as other things directly related to the Lord's campaign, such as the reason for the ocean's initial reluctance to allow the Lord's army to cross over to Lanka)¹, the Deity of the ocean reverentially bowed his head at the feet of Lord Ram and went back to his own abode. (8)

[Note—¹The Deity of the ocean told Lord Ram that he had no real intention of creating an obstruction in the Lord's way, and to prove his integrity and a cooperative attitude he cited how he had asked a mountain named Mainak to rise from the depth of the ocean and invite Hanuman to take some rest while the latter was on his way to Lanka—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 1 and Chaupai line no. 9 that precedes it.

The demons led by Ravana were a formidable enemy, so the Ocean wished to make sure that the Lord is sufficiently powerful to defeat them by testing his might and resolve just like the case of Hanuman when the mother of serpents, known as Sursa, was sent by the gods to test his mettle and war readiness—apropos: Ram Charit Manas, Sundar Kand, Doha no. 2 along with Chaupai line nos. 1-12 that precede it.

There was another reason why the Ocean initially pretended to obstruct Lord Ram's way to Lanka. It was well known that Ravana was very harsh and cruel and unforgiving in his wrath and meting out punishment to those who offended him. So if the Ocean did not pretend to block Lord Ram's progress to Lanka, and if it appeared that he was a willing ally of the Lord, then there were good chances that his act would certainly offend Ravana, and that would mean unending horror for himself as well as all the marine creatures that live in his realm. So therefore, in order to deflect such a terrifying situation the Ocean decided to pretend to block Lord Ram's progress to Lanka; it was merely for show to appease Ravana. Now when the Lord had pulled out his arrow to shoot at him, the Ocean would have an excuse, in case Ravana became furious and came calling, that he was forced to cooperate with Lord Ram under the threat of death.

There was fear from the backyard too, because demon pickets were posted by Ravana on the mainland, to the north of the shore of the ocean where Lord Ram presently stood. We have already read about demons defiling the fire sacrifices of sages, about them attacking Lord Ram himself on different occasions, and how Ravana's sister Supernakha had tried to trap the Lord, an event that culminated in Sita's abduction by Ravana.

These were the many stories and facts that the Deity of the ocean confided to Lord Ram.]

छं०. निज भवन गवनेउ सिंधु श्रीरघुपतिहि यह मत भायऊ । १ ।
यह चरित कलि मलहर जथामति दास तुलसी गायऊ ॥ २ ॥
सुख भवन संसय समन दवन बिषाद रघुपति गुन गना । ३ ।

तजि सकल आस भरोस गावहि सुनहि संतत सठ मना ॥ ४ ॥

chanda.

nija bhavana gavanē'u sindhu śrīraghupatihi yaha mata bhāya'ū. 1.
yaha carita kali malahara jathāmati dāsa tulasī gāya'ū. 2.
sukha bhavana sansaya samana davana biṣāda raghupati guna ganā. 3.
taji sakala āsa bharōsa gāvahi sunahi santata saṭha manā. 4.

The Ocean (i.e. the Deity of the ocean) went to his own abode. The advice given by him to Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) was very much liked by the Lord. (Chanda line no. 1)

This narrative is able to wipe out the negative consequences arising out of sins prevalent in the era of Kaliyug.

[To wit, by hearing and narrating this glorious story of Lord Ram, a devotee is cleansed of all taints that tarnish his inner self in the age of Kaliyug that is known for predominance of sins and evil qualities.]

Tulsidas has sung the Lord's glories and the divine story narrating the Lord's deeds in this world according to his limited abilities. (Chanda line no. 2)

Singing and narrating the divine qualities and glorious virtues of Lord Raghupati (Lord Ram) through the means of stories related to the Lord and his life on earth are like a treasury of happiness, joy and peace (for they bestow eternal pleasure and bliss to the heart). They have the potential of destroying or exterminating all spiritual doubts and consternations that confuse a devotee. They vanquish all grief and sorrows that cause torment to the creature. (Chanda line no. 3)

Oh my stupid mind and heart ("saṭha manā")! Listen to me: abandon all other wishes that you may have, and stop relying on any other source for obtaining peace and happiness in life.

Instead, rely solely on listening to and singing of these divine stories of Lord Ram as the single-window source for all your spiritual requirements, as the only panacea for accessing eternal bliss and happiness, as the fountainhead that would grant you everlasting beatitude and felicity. (Chanda line no. 4)

दो०. सकल सुमंगल दायक रघुनायक गुन गान ।

सादर सुनहिं ते तरहिं भव सिंधु बिना जलजान ॥ ६० ॥

dōhā.

sakala sumaṅgala dāyaka raghunāyaka guna gāna.
sādara sunahim tē tarahim bhava sindhu binā jalajāna. 60.

Verily indeed, the singing and narrating of the glories and divine stories of Lord Raghunayak (Lord Ram) is the only fountainhead that bestows all sorts of auspiciousness, good omens, welfare and well-being to one and all.

Truly, in all sooth and without gainsay, those who are fortunate to listen to the narration of Lord Ram's divine story and of the Lord's glories are able to cross over

this symbolic ocean represented by the endless cycle of transmigration. [To wit, their soul finds liberation and deliverance once and for all. They attain emancipation and salvation for themselves. Their soul attains eternity; they find eternal beatitude and felicity.] (Doha no. 60)

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About the Author

Ajai Kumar Chhawchharia left home when he was approximately 29 years of age due to an inner call of his heart that told him to devote his life in the service of his beloved Lord God, Sri Ram. Worldly attractions did not enchant him at all. So, he didn't marry, and after his father's death he came and settled permanently in Ayodhya, the holy town in India associated with Lord Ram.

Presently he works as an honorary manager of a world famous Kanak Bhavan Temple at Ayodhya, and spends his time writing in English so that the world can access the wonderful nectar of metaphysical, spiritual and devotional philosophy that is contained in Indian scriptures for which they are so renowned.

His English Books published separately by a reputed publisher of India, the details of whom can be had by contacting the author on his email given below, include: (i) The series on '108 Upanishads' in five volumes having eighteen parts, (ii) Veda Vyas' 'Adhyatma Ramayan' in two parts, (iii) 'Devi Puran Ramayan', (iv) Valmiki's 'Adbhut Ramayan', and (v) 'Biography of Lord Ram' based on Tulsidas' books.

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